

(12) UK Patent Application (19) GB (11) 2 359 836 (13) A

(43) Date of Printing by UK Office 05.09.2001

(21) Application No 0110451.2

(22) Date of Filing 12.11.1999

(30) Priority Data

(31) 09192855 (32) 17.11.1998 (33) US

(86) International Application Data
PCT/US99/26714 En 12.11.1999

(87) International Publication Data
WO00/29710 En 25.05.2000

(51) INT CL⁷

E21B 21/10 17/02 23/03 34/08 34/10 43/12 43/14

(52) UK CL (Edition S)

E1F FLH FLM FLW F303

(56) Documents Cited by ISA

GB 2290319 A EP 0811747 A WO 99/47789 A
WO 97/41333 A US 5447201 A

(58) Field of Search by ISA

INT CL⁷ E21B

(71) Applicant(s)

Camco International Inc.
(Incorporated in USA - Delaware)
70330 Ardmore, Houston, Texas 77054,
United States of America

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service

Brian D Stooile
Geco-Prakla (UK) Limited, Schlumberger House,
Buckingham Gate, GATWICK, West Sussex, RH6 0NZ,
United Kingdom

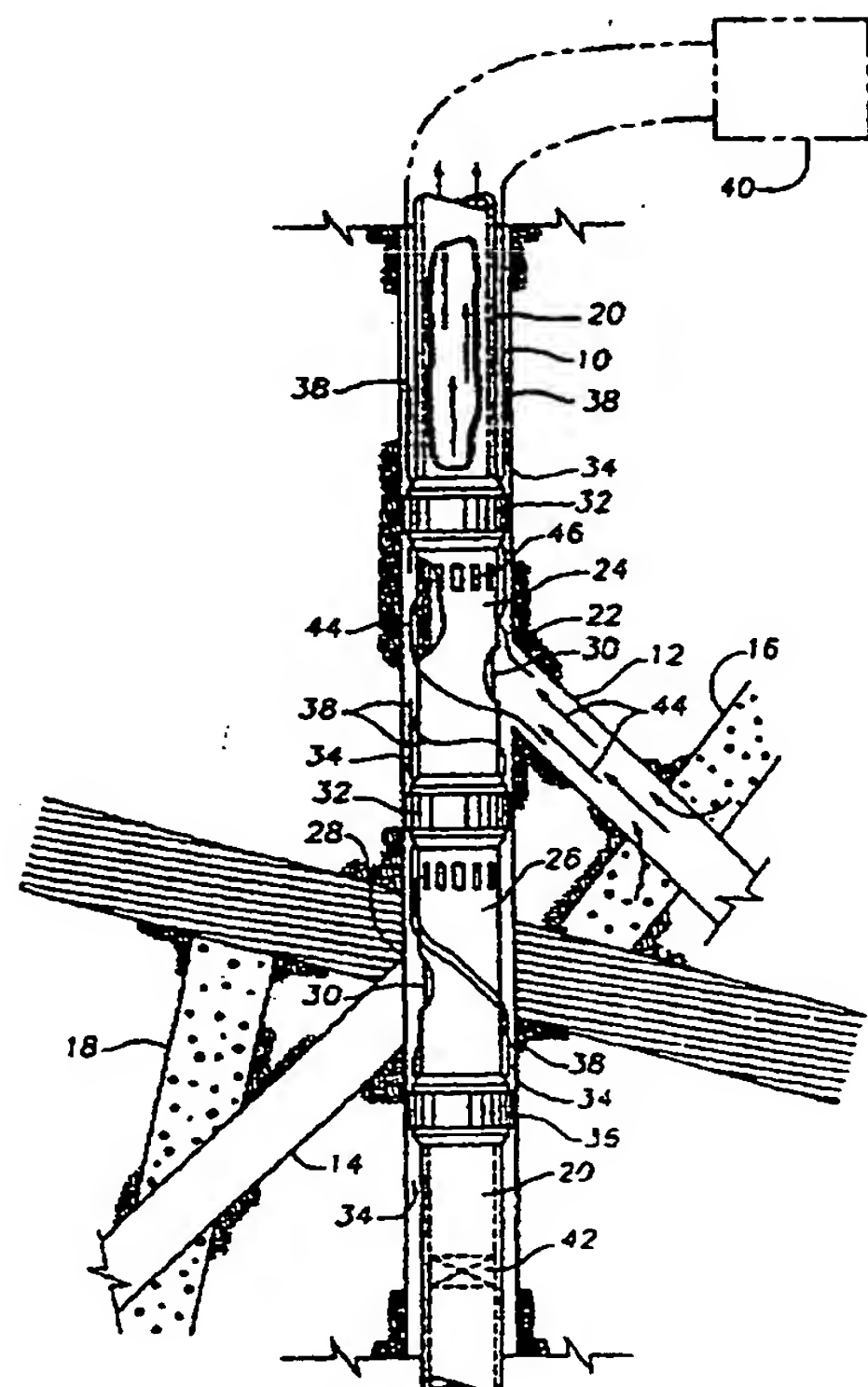
(72) Inventor(s)

Ronald E Pringle
Dwayne D. Leismer
Clay W Milligan

(54) Abstract Title

Wellbore flow control device

(57) A device for regulating fluid flow in a well is provided. The device may include: a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat; means for selectively controlling movement of the sleeve member to regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port; and conduit means for transmitting energy to the movement means. The conduit means may include a first and a second hydraulic control line, a single hydraulic control line, or a single electrical conductor. The movement means may include: a piston connected to the sleeve member and movable in response to a combination of hydraulic fluid, pressurized gas, spring force, and/or annulus pressure; or an electric motor connected to the sleeve member.



GB 2 359 836 A

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Larvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece			TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	ML	Mali	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MN	Mongolia	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MR	Mauritania	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MW	Malawi	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	MX	Mexico	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NE	Niger	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NL	Netherlands	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NO	Norway	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	NZ	New Zealand		
CM	Cameroon			PL	Poland		
CN	China	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CU	Cuba	KZ	Kazakstan	RO	Romania		
CZ	Czech Republic	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
DE	Germany	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DK	Denmark	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
EE	Estonia	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inte. onal Application No
PCT/US 99/26714

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 E21B21/10 E21B34/10 E21B43/14 E21B43/12 E21B17/02
E21B23/03 E21B34/08

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 E21B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 97 41333 A (CARTER GERALD ; PRINGLE RONALD EARL (US); CAMCO INT (US); MORRIS AR) 6 November 1997 (1997-11-06)	1,2,10, 11
X	the whole document	51
A	US 5 447 201 A (MOHN FRANK) 5 September 1995 (1995-09-05) abstract; claims 2,4	1
P,A	WO 99 47789 A (CHURCHILL ANDREW PHILIP) 23 September 1999 (1999-09-23) abstract; figures	1,3,5-9
A	EP 0 811 747 A (HALLIBURTON ENERGY SERV INC) 10 December 1997 (1997-12-10)	

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- *Z* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

15 March 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

03. 10. 2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

FONSECA FERNANDEZ, H

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inter onal Application No
PCT/US 99/26714

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	GB 2 290 319 A (BUYERS MARK ;FRASER SIMON BENEDICT (GB)) 20 December 1995 (1995-12-20) -----	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 99/26714

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

1 - 12, 51

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

1. Claims: 1-12,51

A selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well comprising a body, a position holder, and a sleeve/piston member which opens and closes a flow port, and where said sleeve/piston member is operated from a control fluid pressurized source in a surface connected by means of a first and second hydraulic conduits with both sides of said piston member.

2. Claims: 13-35

A selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well comprising a body, a position holder, and a sleeve/piston member which opens and closes a flow port and where said sleeve/piston member is operated from a control fluid pressurized source in a surface connected by means of an hydraulic conduit on one side of the piston and being biased (pressurized gas from a downhole chamber, tubing pressure, springs, annulus pressure...) on the other side of the piston.

3. Claims: 36-50

A selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well comprising a body, position holder and a sleeve/piston member which opens and closes a flow port, and where said sleeve/piston member is operated by means of a downhole electric motor connected with an electrical conductor to a source of electricity.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 99/26714

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9741333 A	06-11-1997	US 5918669 A AU 2396797 A CA 2252728 A EP 0895561 A EP 1008719 A EP 0987400 A NO 984895 A US 5960874 A US 5927401 A US 5823263 A	06-07-1999 19-11-1997 06-11-1997 10-02-1999 14-06-2000 22-03-2000 23-12-1998 05-10-1999 27-07-1999 20-10-1998
US 5447201 A	05-09-1995	AT 169371 T CA 2101446 A DE 69129943 D DE 69129943 T DE 558534 T EP 0558534 A ES 2048696 T WO 9208875 A GR 93300136 T NO 931736 A	15-08-1998 21-05-1992 10-09-1998 29-04-1999 03-03-1994 08-09-1993 01-04-1994 29-05-1992 31-01-1994 13-05-1993
WO 9947789 A	23-09-1999	AU 2740799 A	11-10-1999
EP 0811747 A	10-12-1997	US 5813460 A AU 722337 B AU 2367397 A CA 2206806 A NO 972285 A	29-09-1998 27-07-2000 11-12-1997 03-12-1997 04-12-1997
GB 2290319 A	20-12-1995	NONE	

PCTWORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ :

E21B 21/10, 34/10

A2

(11) International Publication Number:

WO 00/29710

(43) International Publication Date:

25 May 2000 (25.05.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/26714

(22) International Filing Date: 12 November 1999 (12.11.99)

(30) Priority Data:

09/192,855

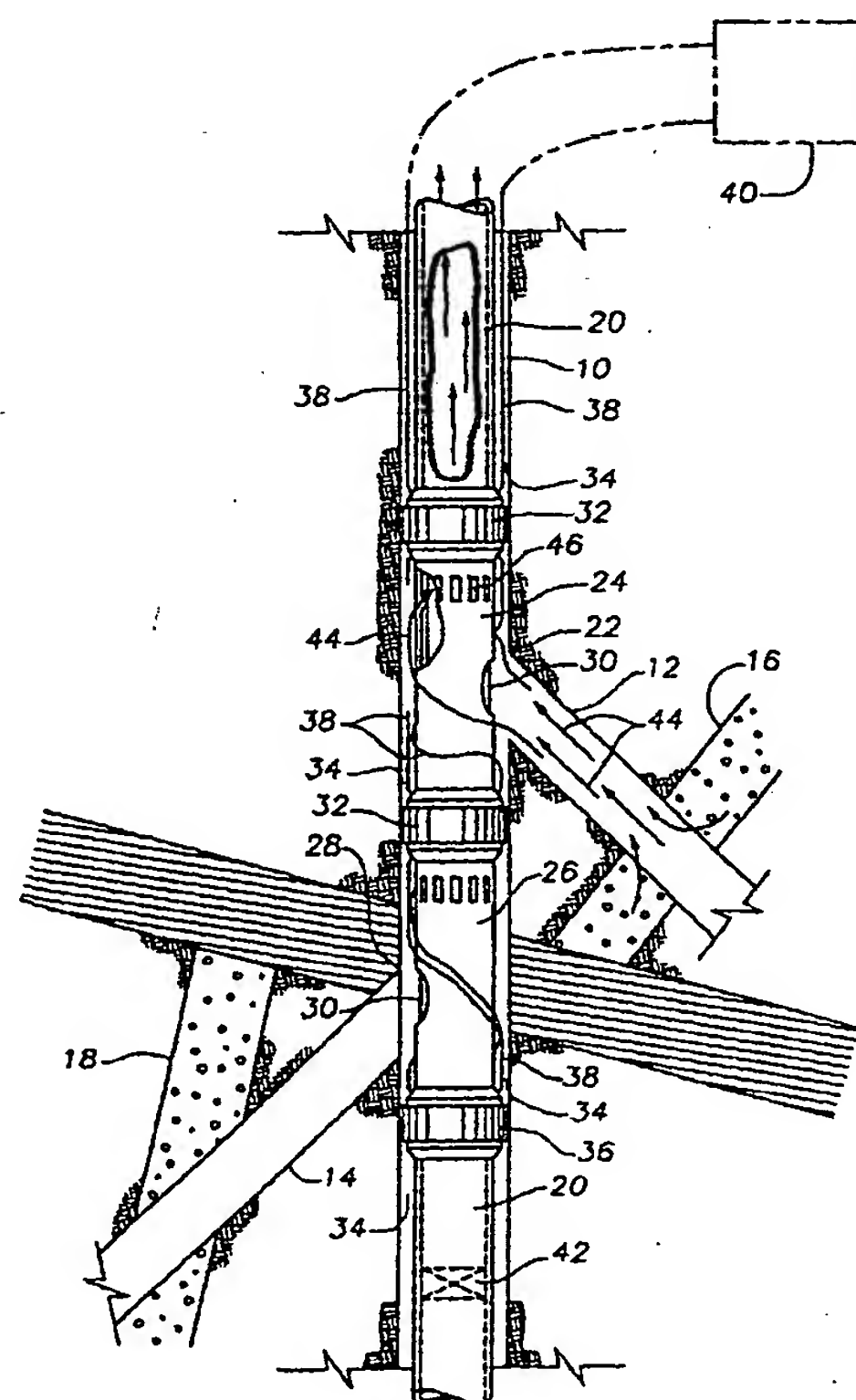
17 November 1998 (17.11.98) US

(71) Applicant: CAMCO INTERNATIONAL INC. [US/US]; 7030
Ardmore, Houston, TX 77054 (US).(72) Inventors: PRINGLE, Ronald, E.; 12030 White Cap Lane,
Houston, TX 77072 (US). LEISMER, Dwayne, D.; 6712
Colonial Drive, Pearland, TX 77584 (US). MILLIGAN,
Clay, W., Jr.; 2406 Midmont Drive, Missouri City, TX
77489 (US).(74) Agent: GRIFFIN, Jeffrey, E.; Schlumberger Technology Cor-
poration, 14910 Airline Road, P. O. Box 1590, Rosharon,
TX 77583 (US).(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG,
BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE,
ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP,
KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD,
MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD,
SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ,
VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW,
SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY,
KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH,
CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL,
PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN,
GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).**Published***Without international search report and to be republished
upon receipt of that report.*

(54) Title: WELLBORE FLOW CONTROL DEVICE

(57) Abstract

A device for regulating fluid flow in a well is provided. The device may include: a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat; means for selectively controlling movement of the sleeve member to regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port; and conduit means for transmitting energy to the movement means. The conduit means may include a first and a second hydraulic control line, a single hydraulic control line, or a single electrical conductor. The movement means may include: a piston connected to the sleeve member and movable in response to a combination of hydraulic fluid, pressurized gas, spring force, and/or annulus pressure; or an electric motor connected to the sleeve member.



FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

WELLBORE FLOW CONTROL DEVICE

The present invention relates to subsurface well completion equipment and, more particularly, to methods and related apparatus for remotely controlling
5 fluid recovery from multiple laterally drilled wellbores.

Hydrocarbon recovery volume from a vertically drilled well can be increased by drilling additional wellbores from that same well. For example, the fluid recovery rate and the well's economic life can be increased by drilling a horizontal or highly deviated interval from a main wellbore radially outward into
10 one or more formations. Still further increases in recovery and well life can be attained by drilling multiple deviated intervals into multiple formations. Once the multilateral wellbores have been drilled and completed there is a need for the recovery of fluids from each wellbore to be individually controlled. Currently, the control of the fluid recovery from these multilateral wellbores has been
15 limited in that once a lateral wellbore has been opened it is not possible to selectively close off and/or reopen the lateral wellbores without the need for the use of additional equipment, such as wireline units, coiled tubing units and workover rigs.

The need for selective fluid recovery is important in that individual
20 producing intervals usually contain hydrocarbons that have different physical and chemical properties and as such may have different unit values. Co-mingling a valuable and desirable crude with one that has, for instance, a high sulfur content would not be commercially expedient, and in some cases is prohibited by

governmental regulatory authorities. Also, because different intervals inherently contain differing volumes of hydrocarbons, it is highly probable that one interval will deplete before the others, and will need to be easily and inexpensively closed off from the vertical wellbore before the other intervals.

5 The use of workover rigs, coiled tubing units and wireline units are relatively inexpensive if used onshore and in typical oilfield locations; however, mobilizing these resources for a remote offshore well can be very expensive in terms of actual dollars spent, and in terms of lost production while the resources are being moved on site. In the case of subsea wells (where no surface platform
10 is present), a drill ship or workover vessel mobilization would be required to merely open/close a downhole wellbore valve.

 The following patents disclose the current multilateral drilling and completion techniques. U.S. Patent 4,402,551 details a simple completion method when a lateral wellbore is drilled and completed through a bottom of an
15 existing traditional, vertical wellbore. Control of production fluids from a well completed in this manner is by traditional surface wellhead valving methods, since improved methods of recovery from only one lateral and one interval is disclosed. The importance of this patent is the recognition of the role of orienting and casing the lateral wellbore, and the care taken in sealing the juncture where
20 the vertical borehole interfaces with the lateral wellbore.

 U.S. Patent 5,388,648 discloses a method and apparatus for sealing the juncture between one or more horizontal wells using deformable sealing means. This completion method deals primarily with completion techniques prior to

insertion of production tubing in the well. While it does address the penetration of multiple intervals at different depths in the well, it does not offer solutions as to how these different intervals may be selectively produced.

U.S. Patent 5,337,808 discloses a technique and apparatus for selective
5 multi-zone vertical and/or horizontal completions. This patent illustrates the need to selectively open and close individual intervals in wells where multiple intervals exist, and discloses devices that isolate these individual zones through the use of workover rigs.

U.S. Patent 5,447,201 discloses a well completion system with selective
10 remote surface control of individual producing zones to solve some of the above described problems. Similarly, U.S. Patent 5,411,085, commonly assigned; hereto, discloses a production completion system which can be remotely manipulated by a controlling means extending between downhole components and a panel located at the surface. Each of these patents, while able to solve
15 recovery problems without a workover rig, fails to address the unique problems associated with multilateral wells, and teaches only recovery methods from multiple interval wells. A multi-lateral well that requires reentry remediation which was completed with either of these techniques has the same problems as before: the production tubing would have to be removed, at great expense, to re-
20 enter the lateral for remediation, and reinserted in the well to resume production.

U.S. Patent 5,474,131 discloses a method for completing multi-lateral wells and maintaining selective re-entry into the lateral wellbores. This method allows for re-entry remediation into deviated laterals, but does not address the

need to remotely manipulate downhole completion accessories from the surface without some intervention technique. In this patent, a special shifting tool is required to be inserted in the well on coiled tubing to engage a set of ears to shift a flapper valve to enable selective entry to either a main wellbore or a lateral. To
5 accomplish this, the well production must be halted, a coiled tubing company called to the job site, a surface valving system attached to the wellhead must be removed, a blow out preventer must be attached to the wellhead, a coiled tubing injector head must be attached to the blow out preventer, and the special shifting tool must be attached to the coiled tubing; all before the coiled tubing can be
10 inserted to the well.

There is a need for a system to allow an operator standing at a remote control panel to selectively permit and prohibit flow from multiple lateral well branches drilled from a common central wellbore without having to resort to common intervention techniques. Alternately, there is a need for an operator to
15 selectively open and close a valve to implement re-entry into a lateral branch drilled from the common wellbore. There is a need for redundant power sources to assure operation of these automated downhole devices, should one or more power sources fail. Finally, there is a need for the fail safe mechanical recovery tools, should these automated systems become inoperative.

20 The present invention has been contemplated to overcome the foregoing deficiencies and meet the above described needs. Specifically, the present invention is a system to recover fluids from a well that has either multiple producing zones adjacent to a central wellbore or has multiple lateral wellbores

which have been drilled from a central wellbore into a plurality of intervals in proximity to the central wellbore. In accordance with the present invention an improved method is disclosed to allow selective recovery from any of the well's intervals by remote control from a panel located at the earth's surface. This

5 selective recovery is enabled by any number of well known controlling means, i.e. by electrical signal, by hydraulic signal, by fiber optic signal, or any combination thereof, such combination comprising a piloted signal of one of these controlling means to operate another. Selective control of producing formations would preclude the necessity of expensive, but commonly practiced workover

10 techniques to change producing zones, such as: (1) standard tubing conveyed intervention, should a production tubing string need to be removed or deployed in the well, or (2) should a work string need to be utilized for remediation, and would also reduce the need and frequency of either (3) coiled tubing remediation or (4) wireline procedures to enact a workover, as well.

15 Preferably, these controlling means may be independent and redundant, to assure operation of the production system in the event of primary control failure; and may be operated mechanically by the aforementioned commonly practiced workover techniques to change producing zones, should the need arise.

In a preferred embodiment, a well comprising a central casing adjacent at

20 least two hydrocarbon producing formations is cemented in the earth. A production tubing string located inside the casing is fixed by any of several well known completion accessories. Packers, which are well known to those skilled in the art, straddle each of the producing formations and seal an annulus, thereby

preventing the produced wellbore fluids from flowing to the surface in the annulus. A surface activated flow control valve with an annularly openable orifice, located between the packers, may be opened or closed upon receipt of a signal transmitted from the control panel, with each producing formation between
5 a wellhead at the surface, and the lowermost producing formations having a corresponding flow control valve. With such an arrangement, any formation can be produced by opening its corresponding flow control valve and closing all other flow control valves in the wellbore. Thereafter, co-mingled flow from the individual formations is prevented, or allowed, as is desired by the operations
10 personnel at the surface control panel. Further, the size of the annularly openable orifice can be adjusted from the surface control panel such that the rate of flow of hydrocarbons therefrom can be adjusted as operating conditions warrant.

In accordance with this preferred embodiment, should the flow control valve lose communication with the surface control panel, or become otherwise
15 inoperable by remote control, mechanical manipulation devices that may be deployed by coiled tubing are within the scope of this invention and are disclosed herein.

In another aspect, the present invention is a selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well, comprising: a body member
20 having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat; a piston connected to the sleeve member and

movably disposed within the central bore of the body member in response to application of pressurized fluid; a first and a second hydraulic conduit connected between a source of pressurized fluid and the body member, the first hydraulic conduit being in fluid communication with a first side of the piston, and the

5 second hydraulic conduit being in fluid communication with a second side of the piston; and a position holder cooperably engageable with a retaining member, one of the position holder and the retaining member being connected to the sleeve member, and the other of the position holder and the retaining member being connected to the body member. Another feature of this aspect of the present

10 invention is that the sleeve member further includes at least one flow slot. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the position holder includes a recessed profile in which a portion of the retaining member is engaged and movably disposed to hold the sleeve member in a plurality of discrete positions. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the

15 recessed profile includes a plurality of axial slots of varying lengths disposed circumferentially about the position holder and in substantially parallel relationship, each axial slot having a recessed portion and an elevated portion, and each axial slot being connected to its immediately neighboring axial slots by ramped slots leading between corresponding recessed and elevated portions of

20 each neighboring axial slot. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the recessed profile is disposed in an indexing cylinder rotatably disposed about the sleeve member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the indexing cylinder and the sleeve member are adapted to

restrict longitudinal movement therebetween. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the retaining member includes an elongate body having a cam finger at a distal end thereof engaged with and movably disposed within a recessed profile in the position holder, and a proximal end of the elongate body being hingedly attached to one of the sleeve member and body member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means for biasing the retaining member into engagement with the position holder. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the retaining member is a spring-loaded detent pin. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second valve seats towards each other. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is an annular piston. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is at least one rod piston.

15 In another aspect, the present invention may be a selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well, comprising: a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat, and being biased towards the first valve seat; a piston connected to the sleeve member and movably disposed within a cylinder in the body member in response to application of pressurized fluid; a hydraulic conduit in fluid communication with a source of pressurized fluid and a first side of the

piston; and a position holder cooperably engageable with a retaining member, one of the position holder and the retaining member being connected to the piston, and the other of the position holder and the retaining member being connected to the body member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that

5 the device may further include means for biasing the sleeve member and the second valve seat towards the first valve seat. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the biasing means includes pressurized gas. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include a gas conduit containing at least a portion of the pressurized gas. Another

10 feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include a charging port connected to the body member through which pressurized gas is loaded into the device. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the biasing means includes a spring. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the biasing means includes pressure in a

15 well annulus. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the first valve seat is slidably disposed within the central bore and about the sleeve member, and movable between a first position and a second position. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the first valve seat is biased towards its first position by a spring. Another feature of this aspect of the present

20 invention is that the spring is compressed between a shoulder in the central bore and the first valve seat. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the sleeve member includes a first annular sealing surface for cooperable sealing engagement with a second annular sealing surface on the central bore, the

second valve seat on the sleeve member being engageable with the first valve seat on the body before the first and second annular sealing surfaces are engageable.

Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the sleeve member further includes at least one flow slot. Another feature of this aspect of the

5 present invention is that the piston includes a first recess in which a shoulder portion of an annular end cap is received, the end cap being secured to the sleeve member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the

position holder includes a recessed profile in which a portion of the retaining member is engaged and movably disposed to hold the sleeve member in a

10 plurality of discrete positions. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the recessed profile includes a plurality of axial slots of varying lengths disposed circumferentially about the position holder and in substantially parallel relationship, each axial slot having a recessed portion and an elevated

15 slots by ramped slots leading between corresponding recessed and elevated portions of each neighboring axial slot. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the recessed profile is disposed in an indexing cylinder rotatably disposed within a sealably enclosed annular space in the body member.

Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the indexing

20 cylinder includes a flange received within a second recess in the piston. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the retaining member includes an elongate body having a cam finger at a distal end thereof engaged with and movably disposed within a recessed profile in the position holder, and

a proximal end of the elongate body being hingedly attached to one of the piston and the body member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means for biasing the retaining member into engagement with the position holder. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the retaining member is a spring-loaded detent pin. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second valve seats towards each other. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is an annular piston. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is at least one rod piston.

In another aspect, the present invention may be a selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well, comprising: a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat; an electric motor connected to the body member and adapted to move the sleeve member longitudinally within the central bore of the body member upon electrical actuation thereof; and an electrical conductor connected between a source of electricity and the motor. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include an actuating member connected between the sleeve member and the motor. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the actuating member includes a piston movably disposed within a cylinder in the body

member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the motor further includes a threaded rod, and the piston further includes a threaded cylinder, the threaded rod being threadably disposed for longitudinal movement within the threaded cylinder. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston includes a first recess in which a shoulder portion of an annular end cap is received, the end cap being secured to the sleeve member. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is an annular piston. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the piston is at least one rod piston. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the electric motor is disposed in a sealably enclosed space in the body member, and the device further includes a compensator piston movably disposed within a compensator cylinder in the body member, a first side of the compensator piston being in fluid communication with a well annulus, and a second side of the compensator piston being in fluid communication with the enclosed space. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means connected to the electric motor for providing a signal to a control panel indicating a distance between the first and second valve seats. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the first valve seat is slidably disposed within the central bore and about the sleeve member, and movable between a first position and a second position. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the first valve seat is biased towards its first position by a spring. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the spring is compressed between a shoulder in the central bore and the first valve

seat. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the sleeve member includes a first annular sealing surface for cooperable sealing engagement with a second annular sealing surface on the central bore, the second valve seat on the sleeve member being engageable with the first valve seat on the
5 body before the first and second annular sealing surfaces are engageable. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the sleeve member further includes at least one flow slot. Another feature of this aspect of the present invention is that the device may further include means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second valve seats towards each other.

10 In another aspect, the present invention may be a selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid flow in a well, comprising: a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least one flow port, and a first valve seat; a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for cooperable sealing
15 engagement with the first valve seat; means for selectively controlling movement of the sleeve member to regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port; and conduit means for transmitting energy to the movement means.

The features and advantages of the present invention will be appreciated and understood by those skilled in the art from the following detailed description
20 and drawings.

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a wellbore completed using one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Figures 2 A-G taken together form a longitudinal section of one preferred embodiment of an apparatus of the present invention with a lateral access door in the open position.

Figures 3 A-H taken together form a longitudinal section of the apparatus of Figures 2 A-G with a work string shown entering a lateral, and a longitudinal section of a selective orienting deflector tool located in position.

Figures 4 A-B illustrate two cross sections of Figure 3 taken along line "4-4", without the service tools as shown therein. Figure 4-A depicts the cross section with a rotating lateral access door shown in the open position, while Figure 4-B depicts the cross section with the rotating lateral access door shown in the closed position.

Figure 5 illustrates a cross section of Figure 3E taken along line "5-5", without the service tools as shown therein.

Figure 6 illustrates a cross section of Figure 3F taken along line "6-6", and depicts a locating, orienting and locking mechanism for anchoring the multilateral flow control system to the casing.

Figure 7 illustrates a longitudinal section of Figure 5 taken along line "7-7", and depicts an opening of the rotating lateral access door shown in the open position, and the sealing mechanism thereof.

Figure 8 illustrates a cross section of Figure 3E taken along line "8-8", and depicts an orienting and locking mechanism for a selective orienting deflector tool and is located therein.

Figures 9 A-D taken together form a longitudinal section of one preferred embodiment of an apparatus for remote control of fluid flow within a well.

Figure 10 illustrates a cross section of Figure 9A taken along line "10-10".

Figure 11 illustrates a cross section of Figure 9A taken along line "11-11".

5 Figure 12 illustrates a cross section of Figure 9B taken along line "12-12".

Figure 13 illustrates a cross section of Figure 9C taken along line "13-13".

Figure 14 illustrates a cross section of Figure 9D taken along line "14-14".

Figure 15 illustrates a planar projection of an outer cylindrical surface of a position holder shown in Figure 9C.

10 Figure 16 illustrates a side view of an upper portion of the embodiment shown in Figures 9 A-D.

Figures 17 A-D taken together form a longitudinal section of another preferred embodiment of an apparatus for remote control of fluid flow within a well.

15 Figure 18 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17B taken along line "18-18".

Figure 19 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17B taken along line "19-19".

20 Figure 20 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17C taken along line "20-20".

Figure 21 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17C taken along line "21-21".

Figure 22 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17D taken along line "22-22".

Figure 23 illustrates a cross section of Figure 17D taken along line "23-23".

5 Figures 24 A-C taken together form a longitudinal section of another preferred embodiment of an apparatus for remote control of fluid flow within a well.

Figure 25 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24A taken along line "25-25".

10 Figure 26 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24A taken along line "26-26".

Figure 27 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24B taken along line "27-27".

15 Figure 28 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24C taken along line "28-28".

Figure 29 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24C taken along line "29-29".

Figure 30 illustrates a cross section of Figure 24C taken along line "30-30".

20 Figure 31 illustrates a longitudinal cross section of Figure 27 taken along line "31-31".

The present invention is a system for remotely controlling multilateral wells, and will be described in conjunction with its use in a well with three

producing formations for purposes of illustration only. One skilled in the art will appreciate many differing applications of the described apparatus. It should be understood that the described invention may be used in multiples for any well with a plurality of producing formations where either multiple lateral branches of a well are present, or multiple producing formations that are conventionally completed, such as by well perforations or uncased open hole, or by any combination of these methods. Specifically, the apparatus of the present invention includes enabling devices for automated remote control and access of multiple formations in a central wellbore during production, and allow work and time saving intervention techniques when remediation becomes necessary.

For the purposes of this discussion, the terms "upper" and "lower", "up hole" and "downhole", and "upwardly" and "downwardly" are relative terms to indicate position and direction of movement in easily recognized terms. Usually, these terms are relative to a line drawn from an upmost position at the surface to a point at the center of the earth, and would be appropriate for use in relatively straight, vertical wellbores. However, when the wellbore is highly deviated, such as from about 60 degrees from vertical, or horizontal these terms do not make sense and therefore should not be taken as limitations. These terms are only used for ease of understanding as an indication of what the position or movement would be if taken within a vertical wellbore.

Referring now to Figure 1, a substantially vertical wellbore 10 is shown with an upper lateral wellbore 12 and a lower lateral wellbore 14 drilled to intersect an upper producing zone 16 and an intermediate producing zone 18, as is

well known to those skilled in the art of multilateral drilling. A production tubing 20 is suspended inside the vertical wellbore 10 for recovery of fluids to the earth's surface. Adjacent to an upper lateral well junction 22 is an upper fluid flow control apparatus 24 of the present invention while a lower fluid flow control apparatus 26 of the present invention is located adjacent to a lower lateral well junction 28. Each fluid flow control apparatus 24 and 26 are the same as or similar in configuration. In one preferred embodiment, the fluid flow control apparatus 24 and 26 generally comprises a generally cylindrical mandrel body having a central longitudinal bore extending therethrough, with threads or other connection devices on one end thereof for interconnection to the production tubing 20. A selectively operable lateral access door is provided in the mandrel body for alternately permitting and preventing a service tool from laterally exiting the body therethrough and into a lateral wellbore. In addition, in one preferred embodiment, a selectively operable flow control valve is provided in the body for regulating fluid flow between the outside of the body and the central bore.

In the fluid flow control apparatus 24 a lateral access door 30 comprises an opening in the body and a door or plug member. The door may be moved longitudinally or radially, and may be moved by one or more means, as will be described in more detail below. In Figure 1 the door 30 is shown oriented toward its respective adjacent lateral wellbore. A pair of permanent or retrievable elastomeric packers 32 are provided on separate bodies that are connected by threads to the mandrel body or, preferably, are connected as part of the mandrel body. The packers 32 are used to isolate fluid flow between producing zones 16

and 18 and provide a fluidic seal thereby preventing co-mingling flow of produced fluids through a wellbore annulus 34. A lowermost packer 36 is provided to anchor the production tubing 20, and to isolate a lower most producing zone (not shown) from the producing zones 16 and 18 above. A communication conduit or cable or conduit 38 is shown extending from the fluid flow control apparatus 26, passing through the isolation packers 32, up to a surface control panel 40. A tubing plug 42, which is well known, may be used to block flow from the lower most producing zone (not shown) into the tubing 20.

A well with any multiple of producing zones can be completed in this fashion, and a large number of flow configurations can be attained with the apparatus of the present invention. For the purposes of discussion, all these possibilities will not be discussed, but remain within the spirit and scope of the present invention. In the configuration shown in Figure 1, the production tubing 20 is plugged at the lower end by the tubing plug 42, the lower fluid flow control apparatus 26 has a flow control valve that is shown closed, and the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24 is shown with its flow control valve in the open position. This production configuration is managed by an operator standing on the surface at the control panel 40, and can be changed therewith by manipulation of the controls on that panel. In this production configuration, flow from all producing formations is blocked, except from the upper producing zone 16. Hydrocarbons 44 present therein will flow from the formation 16, through the upper lateral 12, into the annulus 34 of the vertical wellbore 10, into a set of ports

46 in the mandrel body and into the interior of the production tubing 20. From there, the produced hydrocarbons move to the surface.

Turning now to Figures 2 A-G, which, when taken together illustrate the fluid flow control apparatus 24. An upper connector 48 is provided on a
5 generally cylindrical mandrel body 50 for sealable engagement with the production tubing 20. An elastomeric packing element 52 and a gripping device 54 are connected to the mandrel body 50. A first communication conduit 56, preferably, but not limited to electrical communication, and a second communication conduit 58, preferably, but not limited to hydraulic control
10 communication, extend from the earth's surface into the mandrel 50. The first 56 and second 58 communication conduits communicate their respective signals to/from the earth's surface and into the mandrel 50 around a set of bearings 60 to slip joint 62. The electrical communication conduit or cable 56 connects at this location, while the hydraulic communication conduit 58 extends therepast. The
15 bearings 60 reside in a rotating swivel joint 64, which allows the mandrel body 50 and its lateral access door 30 to be rotated relative to tubing 20, to ensure that the lateral access door 30 is properly aligned with the lateral wellbore. Further, the electrical communication conduit or cable 56 communicates with a first pressure transducer 66 to monitor annulus pressure, a temperature and pressure sensor 68
20 to monitor temperature and hydraulic pressure, and/or a second pressure transducer 70 to monitor tubing pressure. Signals from these transducers are communicated to the control panel 40 on the surface so operations personnel can make informed decisions about downhole conditions.

In this preferred embodiment, the electrical communication conduit or cable also communicates with a solenoid valve 72, which selectively controls the flow of hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic communication conduit 58 to an upper hydraulic chamber 74, across a moveable piston 76, to lower hydraulic chamber 78. The differential pressures in these two chambers 74 and 78 move the operating piston 76 and a sleeve extending therefrom in relation to an annularly openable port or orifice 80 in the mandrel body 50 to allow hydrocarbons to flow from the annulus 34 to the tubing 20. Further, the rate of fluid flow can be controlled by adjusting the relative position of the piston 76 through the use of a flow control position indicator 82, which provides the operator constant and instantaneous feedback as to the size of the opening selected.

In some instances, however, normal operation of the flow control valve may not be possible for any number of reasons. An alternate and redundant method of opening or closing the flow control valve and the annularly operable orifice 80 uses a coiled tubing deployed shifting tool 84 landed in a profile in the internal surface of the mandrel body 50. Weight applied to this shifting tool 84 is sufficient to move the flow control valve to either the open or closed positions as dictated by operational necessity, as can be understood by those skilled in the art.

The electrical communication conduit or cable 56 further communicates electrical power to a high torque rotary motor 88 which rotates a pinion gear 90 to rotate a lateral access plug member or door 92. This rotational force opens and closes the rotating lateral access door 92 should entry into the lateral wellbore be required. In some instances, however, normal operation of the rotating lateral

access door 92 may not be possible for any number of reasons. An alternate, and redundant method of opening the rotating lateral access door 92 is also provided wherein a coiled tubing deployed rotary tool 94 is shown located in a lower profile 96 in the interior of the mandrel body 50. Weight applied to this rotary
5 tool 94 is sufficient to rotate the rotating lateral access door 92 to either the open or closed positions as dictated by operational necessity, as would be well known to those skilled in the art.

When the fluid flow apparatus 24 and 26 are set within the wellbore the depth and azimuthal orientation is controlled by a spring loaded, selective
10 orienting key 98 on the mandrel body 50 which interacts with an orienting sleeve within a casing nipple, which is well known to those skilled in the art. Isolation of the producing zone is assured by the second packing element 52, and the gripping device 54, both mounted on the mandrel body 50, where an integrally formed lower connector 100 for sealable engagement with the production tubing
15 20 resides.

Referring now to Figures 3 A-H, which, when taken together illustrate the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24, set and operating in a well casing 102. In this embodiment, an upper valve seat 104 on the mandrel 50 and a lower 106 valve seat on the piston 76 are shown sealably engaged, thereby blocking fluid
20 flow. The lateral access door 92 is in the form of a plug member that is formed at an angle to facilitate movement of service tools into and out of the lateral. Once so opened, a coiled tubing 108, or other well known remediation tool, can be easily inserted in the lateral wellbore. For purposes of illustration, a flexible

tubing member 110 is shown attached to the coiled tubing 108, which is in turn, attached to a pulling tool 112, that is being inserted in a cased lateral 114.

A selective orienting deflector tool 116 is shown set in a profile 118 formed in the interior surface of the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24. The
5 deflector tool 116 is located, oriented, and held in position by a set of locking keys 120, which serves to direct any particular service tool inserted in the vertical wellbore 10, into the proper cased lateral 114.

The depth and azimuthal orientation of the assembly as hereinabove discussed is controlled by a spring loaded, selective orienting key 98, which sets
10 in a casing profile 122 of a casing nipple 124. Isolation of the producing zone is assured by the second packing element 52, and the gripping device 54, both mounted on the central mandrel 50.

Figure 4 A-B is a cross section taken at "A-A" of Figure 3-D, shown without the flexible tubing member 110 in place, and represents a view of the top
15 of the rotating lateral access door 92. Figure 4-A illustrates the relationship of the well casing 102, the cased lateral 114, the pinion gear 90, and the rotating lateral access door 92, shown in the open position. Figure 4-B illustrates the relationship of the well casing 102, the cased lateral 114, the pinion gear 90, and the rotating lateral access door 92, shown in the closed position. Referring now to Figure 5,
20 which is a cross section taken at "5-5" of Figure 3-E, and is shown without the flexible tubing member 110 in place, at a location at the center of the intersection of the cased lateral 114, and the well casing 102. This diagram shows the rotating lateral access door 92 in the open position, and a door seal 126. Figure 6 is a

cross section taken at "6-6" of Figure 3-F and illustrates in cross section the manner in which the selective orienting key 98 engages the casing nipple 124 assuring the assembly described herein is located and oriented at the correct position in the well.

5 Turning now to Figure 7, which is a longitudinal section taken at "7-7" of Figure 5. This diagram primarily depicts the manner in which the door seal 126 seals around an elliptical opening 128 formed by the intersection of the cylinders formed by the cased lateral 114 and the rotating lateral access door 92. This view clearly shows the bevel used to ease movement of service tools into and out of the
10 cased lateral 114. The final diagram, Figure 8, is a cross section taken at "8-8" of Figure 3-E. This shows the relationship of the casing nipple 124, the orienting deflector tool 116, the profile 118 formed in the interior surface of the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24, and how the locking keys 120 interact with the profile 118.

15 In a typical operation, the oil well production system of the present invention is utilized in wells with a plurality of producing formations which may be selectively produced. Referring once again to Figure 1, if it were operationally desirable to produce from the upper producing zone 16 without co-mingling the flow with the hydrocarbons from the other formations; first a tubing plug 42
20 would need to be set in the tubing to isolate the lower producing zone (not shown). The operator standing at the control panel would then configure the control panel 40 to close the lower fluid flow control apparatus 26, and open the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24. Both rotating lateral access doors 30

would be configured closed. In this configuration, flow is blocked from both the intermediate producing zone 18, and the lower producing zone and hydrocarbons from the upper producing zone would enter the upper lateral 12, flow into the annulus 34, through the set of ports 46 on the upper fluid flow control apparatus 24, and into the production tubing 20, which then moves to the surface. Different flow regimes can be accomplished simply by altering the arrangement of the open and closed valves from the control panel, and moving the location of the tubing plug 42. The necessity of the tubing plug 42 can be eliminated by utilizing another flow control valve to meter flow from the lower formation as well.

10 When operational necessity dictates that one or more of the laterals requires re-entry, a simple operation is all that is necessary to gain access therein. For example, assume the upper lateral 12 is chosen for remediation. The operator at the remote control panel 40 shuts all flow control valves, assures that all rotating lateral access doors 30 are closed except the one adjacent the upper
15 lateral 12, which would be opened. If the orienting deflector tool 116 is not installed, it would become necessary to install it at this time by any of several well known methods. In all probability, however, the deflector tool 116 would already be in place. Entry of the service tool in the lateral could then be accomplished, preferably by coiled tubing or a flexible tubing such as CO-
20 FLEXIP brand pipe, because the production tubing 20 now has an opening oriented toward the lateral, and a tool is present to deflect tools running in the tubing into the desired lateral. Production may be easily resumed by configuring the flow control valves as before.

Another specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control valve of the present invention is shown in Figures 9 through 16.

With reference to Figures 9 A-D, this specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control valve of the present invention is identified generally by the reference numeral 130. Referring to Figure 9A, the valve 130 includes a generally cylindrical body 132 having a central bore 134 extending therethrough, at least one flow port 136 through a sidewall thereof, and a first valve seat 138. The valve 130 further includes a sleeve member 140 that is disposed for longitudinal movement within the central bore 134 of the body 132.

10 The sleeve member 140 may include at least one flow slot 142, and a second valve seat 144 for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat 138 on the body 132. In this embodiment, as shown in Figure 9B, a piston 146 may be connected to, or a part of, the sleeve 140, and may be sealably, slidably disposed within the central bore 134 of the body 132. In a specific embodiment, the piston

15 146 may be an annular piston or at least one rod piston. As best shown in Figure 16, in this embodiment of the present invention, a first hydraulic conduit 148 and a second hydraulic conduit 150 are connected between a source of hydraulic fluid, such as at the earth's surface (not shown), and the valve body 132. The first hydraulic conduit 148 is in fluid communication with a first side 152 of the piston

20 146, and the second hydraulic conduit 150 is in fluid communication with a second side 154 of the piston 146 via a passageway 156 in the body 132.

Longitudinal movement of the sleeve 140 within the central bore 134 of the body 132 is controlled by application and/or removal of pressurized fluid

from the first and second hydraulic conduits 148 and 150 to and from the piston 146. Specifically, removal of pressurized fluid from the first side 152 of the piston 146 by bleeding pressurized fluid from the first hydraulic conduit 148, and/or application of pressurized fluid to the second side 154 of the piston 146 by applying pressurized fluid from the second hydraulic conduit 150, results in upward movement of the sleeve member 140. Similarly, removal of pressurized fluid from the second side 154 of the piston 146 by bleeding pressurized fluid from the second hydraulic conduit 150, and/or application of pressurized fluid to the first side 152 of the piston 146 by applying pressurized fluid from the first hydraulic conduit 148, results in downward movement of the sleeve member 140.

As best shown in Figure 9A, when the sleeve member 140 is biased in its maximum upward position, the first and second valve seats 138 and 144 are cooperably engaged to restrict fluid flow through the at least one flow port 136 in the valve body 132. But when the sleeve member 140 is moved downwardly so as to disengage the first and second valve seats 138 and 144, fluid flow is permitted through the at least one flow port 136 in the valve body 132, and through the at least one flow slot 142 in the sleeve member 140.

The valve 130 may be provided with a position holder to enable an operator at the earth's surface to remotely locate and maintain the sleeve member 140 in a plurality of discrete positions, thereby providing the operator with the ability to remotely regulate the rate of fluid flow through the at least one flow port 136 in the valve body, and/or through the at least one flow slot 142 in the sleeve member 140. The position holder may be provided in a variety of configurations.

In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figures 9C-9D and 13-15, the position holder may include a cammed indexer 160 having a recessed profile 162 (Figure 15), and be adapted so that a retaining member 164 (Figures 9C-9D) may be biased into cooperable engagement with the recessed profile 162, as will be more fully explained below. In a specific embodiment, one of the position holder and the retaining member may be connected to the sleeve member 140, and the other of the position holder and the retaining member may be connected to the valve body 132. In a specific embodiment, the recessed profile 162 may be formed in the sleeve member 140, or it may be formed in an indexing cylinder 166 disposed about the sleeve member 140 (Figure 9C). In this embodiment, the indexing cylinder 166 and the sleeve member 140 are fixed to each other so as to prevent longitudinal movement relative to each other. As to relative rotatable movement between the two, however, the indexing cylinder 166 and sleeve member 140 may be fixed so as to prevent relative rotatable movement between the two, or the indexing cylinder 166 may be slidably disposed about the sleeve member 140 so as to permit relative rotatable movement. In the specific embodiment shown in Figures 9C and 9D, in which the recessed profile 162 is formed in the indexing cylinder 166, the indexing cylinder 166 is disposed for rotatable movement relative to the sleeve member 140, as per roller bearings 168 and 170, and ball bearings 172 and 174 (see Figure 9C). The valve body 132 may include linear bearings 176-180 (Figures 9B-9D) to facilitate axial movement of the sleeve member 140 within the central bore 134.

In a specific embodiment, with reference to Figures 9C and 9D, the retaining member 164 may include an elongate body 182 having a cam finger 184 at a distal end thereof (see also Figure 13) and a hinge bore 186 at a proximal end thereof (see also Figure 14). A hinge pin 188 is disposed within the hinge bore 5 186 and connected to the valve body 132, as shown in Figures 9D and 14. In this manner, the retaining member 164 may be hingedly connected to the valve body 132. As best shown in Figure 9C, a biasing member 190, such as a spring, may be provided to bias the retaining member 164 into engagement with the recessed profile 162. Other embodiments of the retaining member 164 are within the 10 scope of the present invention. For example, the retaining member 164 may be a spring-loaded detent pin (not shown) that may be attached to the valve body 132.

The recessed profile 162 will now be described, primarily with reference to Figure 15, which illustrates a planar projection of the recessed profile 162 in the indexing cylinder 166. As shown in Figure 15, the recessed profile 162 15 preferably includes a plurality of axial slots 192 of varying length disposed circumferentially around the indexing cylinder 166, in substantially parallel relationship, each of which are adapted to selectively receive the cam finger 184 on the retaining member 164. While the specific embodiment shown includes eleven axial slots 192, this number should not be taken as a limitation. Rather, it 20 should be understood that the present invention encompasses a cammed indexer 160 having any number of axial slots 192. Each axial slot 192 includes a lower portion 194 and an upper portion 196. The upper portion 196 is recessed, or deeper, relative to the lower portion 194, and an inclined shoulder 198 separates

the lower and upper portions 194 and 196. An upwardly ramped slot 200 leads from the upper portion 196 of each axial slot 192 to the elevated lower portion 194 of an immediately neighboring axial slot 192, with the inclined shoulder 198 defining the lower wall of each upwardly ramped slot 200.

5 In operation, the pressure in the second hydraulic conduit 150 is preferably normally greater than the pressure in the first hydraulic conduit 148 such that the sleeve member 140 is normally biased upwardly, so that the cam finger 184 of the retaining member 164 is positioned against the bottom of the lower portion 194 of one of the axial slots 192. When it is desired to change the
10 position of the sleeve member 140, however, the pressure in the first hydraulic conduit 148 should momentarily be greater than the pressure in the second hydraulic conduit 150 for a period long enough to shift the cam finger 184 into engagement with the recessed upper portion 196 of the axial slot 192. Then the pressure differential between the first and second hydraulic control lines 148 and
15 150 should be changed so that the pressure in the second control line 150 is greater than the pressure in the first control line 148 so as to move the sleeve member 140 upwardly, thereby causing the cam finger 184 to engage the inclined shoulder 198 and move up the upwardly ramped slot 200 and into the lower portion 194 of the immediately neighboring axial slot 192 having a different
20 length. It is noted that, in the specific embodiment shown, the indexing cylinder 166 will rotate relative to the retaining member 164, which is hingedly secured to the valve body 132. By changing the relative pressure between the first and second hydraulic control lines 148 and 150, the cam finger 184 may be moved

into the axial slot 192 having the desired length corresponding to the desired position of the sleeve member 140. This enables an operator at the earth's surface to shift the sleeve member 140 into a plurality of discrete positions and control the distance between the first and second valve seats 138 and 144 (Figure 5 9A), and thereby regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port 136 in the valve body 132.

It is noted that, when the valve 130 is positioned within a well (not shown), the sleeve member 140 is exposed to annulus pressure through the at least one flow port 136 in the valve body 132. In a specific embodiment, the 10 valve 130 may be designed such that the annulus pressure imparts an upward force to the sleeve member 140 to assist in maintaining it in its closed, or sealed, position. For example, this may be accomplished by making the outer diameter of the sleeve member 140 adjacent the interface of the first and second valve seats 138 and 144 (Figure 9A) greater than the outer diameter of the sleeve member at 15 some point below the at least one flow port 136, such as at dynamic seal 145 (Figure 9B). This difference in outer diameters at these sealing points will result in the annulus pressure acting to force the sleeve member 140 upwardly when the first and second valve seats 138 and 144 are in contact.

Another specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control 20 valve of the present invention is shown in Figures 17 through 23.

With reference to Figures 17 A-D, this specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control valve of the present invention is identified generally by the reference numeral 202. Referring to Figure 17A, the valve 202

includes a generally cylindrical body 204 having a central bore 206 extending therethrough, at least one flow port 208 through a sidewall thereof, and a first valve seat 210. In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figure 17B, the first valve seat 210 may be slidably disposed within the central bore 206, and movable
5 between a first, or uncompressed, position (not shown), and a second, or compressed, position, which is the position illustrated in Figure 17B. The body 204 may include a downstop shoulder 209 against which first valve seat 210 abuts when in its first, or uncompressed, position (not shown). In this specific embodiment, the valve 202 may further include a biasing mechanism, such as a
10 wave spring 205, disposed within the central bore 206 and contained between the slidably-disposed first valve seat 210 and a shoulder 207 on the valve body 204. The manner in which the wave spring 205 cooperates with the first valve seat 210 will be explained below. The valve 202 further includes a sleeve member 212 (Figures 17B and 17C) that is disposed for longitudinal movement within the
15 central bore 206 of the body 204. The sleeve member 212 may include at least one flow slot 214, and a second valve seat 216 for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat 210 on the body 204. As shown in Figure 17C, the sleeve member 212 may also include a first annular sealing surface 217 for cooperable sealing engagement with a second annular sealing surface 219 disposed about the
20 central bore 206 of the valve body 204. As will be more fully explained below, valve 202 is designed so that when the sleeve member 212 is being moved from an open position (not shown) to a closed position, as shown in Figures 17B and 17C, the second valve seat 216 on the sleeve member 212 will come into contact

with the first valve seat 210 on the valve body 204 before the first annular sealing surface 217 on the sleeve member 212 comes into contact with the second annular sealing surface 219 on the valve body 204.

In this embodiment, as shown in Figure 17C, at least one piston, such as a rod piston 218, may be connected to, or in contact with, the sleeve member 212, and may be sealably, slidably disposed within at least one upper cylinder 220 and at least one lower cylinder 223 in the valve body 204. In a specific embodiment, the piston 218 may be an annular piston. A first end 221 of the rod piston 218 is in fluid communication with a source of pressurized fluid that is transmitted from a remote location (not shown), such as at the earth's surface (not shown), through a hydraulic conduit 226 that is connected to the valve body 204. As shown in Figure 20, in a specific embodiment, the valve 202 may include three rod pistons 218, 218a and 218b, and pressurized fluid may be transmitted from the hydraulic conduit 226 to the rod pistons 218a and 218b via a first and a second fluid passageway 228 and 230, respectively. In a specific embodiment, the rod piston 218 may include an upper recess 222 in which a shoulder portion 224 of an annular end cap 225 may be received. The annular end cap 224 is connected, as by threads, to a lower end of the sleeve member 212. As pressurized fluid is applied to the first end(s) 221 of the rod piston(s) 218, they will move downwardly within the upper cylinder(s) 220, thereby causing downward movement of the sleeve member 212.

The valve 202 may also be provided with a mechanism for causing upward movement of the sleeve member 212. In this regard, with reference to

Figure 17A, in a specific embodiment, the valve 202 may include a source of pressurized gas, such as pressurized nitrogen, which may be contained within a sealed chamber, such as a gas conduit 232. An upper portion of the gas conduit 232 may be coiled within a housing 234 formed within the body 204, and a lower portion 236 of the gas conduit 232 (Figures 17B and 17C) may extend outside the body 204 and terminate at a fitting 238 (Figure 17C) connected to the body 204. As shown in Figure 17C, the gas conduit 232 is in fluid communication with a gas passageway 240 within the body 204 (see also Figure 21), which is in fluid communication with a second end 242 of the at least one rod piston 218 through a sealably enclosed annular space 241 within the body 204. Appropriate seals are provided to contain the pressurized gas. The gas conduit 232 may further include a fluid barrier, such as oil or silicone. With reference to Figure 17D, the body 204 may include a charging port 244 through which pressurized gas may be introduced into the valve 202. Mechanisms other than pressurized gas for causing upward movement of the sleeve member 212 are within the scope of the present invention, and may include, for example, a spring (not shown), annulus pressure, tubing pressure, or any combination of pressurized gas, annulus pressure, tubing pressure, and a spring.

With reference to Figures 17C and 17D, the valve 202 may include a position holder, similar to the position holder discussed above in connection with the embodiment shown in Figures 9-16. In this specific embodiment, the position holder may include an indexing cylinder 246 that is slidably disposed within the annular space 241. The indexing cylinder 246 may also be rotatably disposed

within the annular space 241, as per bearings 248 and 250. The indexing cylinder 246 may also include a recessed profile, as discussed above and illustrated in Figure 15. As shown in Figure 17C, the indexing cylinder 246 may include a flange 252 that is received within a second recess 253 in the second end 242 of the rod piston 218. In this manner, the rod piston 218 is connected to the indexing cylinder 246, so that the indexing cylinder 246 is movable in response to movement of the piston 218. The position holder also includes a retaining member 254, the structure and operation of which is as described above in connection with the embodiment shown in Figures 9-16.

10 The operation of this embodiment will now be explained. The valve 202 is pre-charged through the charging port 244 with sufficient pressurized gas to maintain the sleeve member 212 biased into its maximum upward, or normally-closed, position, as shown in Figures 17A-D, so that the first and second valve seats 210 and 216 are engaged to restrict fluid flow through the at least one flow port 208 in body 204. When it is desired to permit fluid flow through the at least one flow port 208, hydraulic fluid is applied from the hydraulic conduit 226 to the first end 221 of the rod piston 218, with sufficient magnitude to overcome the upward force imparted to the piston 218 by the pressurized gas, thereby forcing the piston 218 downwardly, along with the sleeve member 212 and the indexing cylinder 246. The desired position of the sleeve member 212 is selected by increasing and decreasing pressure in the hydraulic conduit 226 as needed to move the retaining member 254 into the appropriate slot of the recessed profile (recall Figure 15), during which process the indexing cylinder 246 will rotate and

move longitudinally within the enclosed space 241. By adjusting the position of the sleeve member 212, an operator at the earth's surface may remotely regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port 208 in the body 204 and/or through the at least one flow slot 214 in the sleeve member 212. As noted above, when
5 the sleeve member 212 is being returned to its fully-closed position, the second valve seat 216 on the sleeve member 212 will come into contact with the first valve seat 210 on the valve body 204 before the first annular sealing surface 217 on the sleeve member 212 comes into contact with the second annular sealing surface 219 on the valve body 204. The sleeve member 212 will continue to
10 move upwardly, thereby shifting the first valve seat 210 relative to the body 204 and compressing the wave spring 205, until the first annular sealing surface 217 on the sleeve member 212 comes into contact with the second annular sealing surface 219 on the valve body 204.

Another specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control
15 valve of the present invention is shown in Figures 24 through 31.

With reference to Figures 24 A-C, this specific embodiment of the selectively operable flow control valve of the present invention is electrically-operated and identified generally by the reference numeral 256. Referring to Figure 24A, the valve 256 includes a generally cylindrical body 258 having a
20 central bore 260 extending therethrough, at least one flow port 262 through a sidewall thereof, and a first valve seat 264. In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figure 24A, the first valve seat 264 may be slidably disposed within the central bore 260, and movable between a first, or uncompressed, position (not shown),

and a second, or compressed, position, which is the position illustrated in Figure 24A. The body 258 may include a downstop shoulder 267 against which the first valve seat 264 abuts when in its first, or uncompressed, position (not shown). In this specific embodiment, the valve 256 may further include a biasing
5 mechanism, such as a wave spring 266, disposed within the central bore 260 and contained between the slidably-disposed first valve seat 264 and a shoulder 270 on the valve body 258. The manner in which the wave spring 266 cooperates with the first valve seat 264 is as explained above in connection with the embodiment shown in Figures 17-23. The valve 256 further includes a sleeve
10 member 272 (Figures 24A and 24B) that is disposed for longitudinal movement within the central bore 260 of the body 258. The sleeve member 272 may include at least one flow slot 274, and a second valve seat 276 for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat 264 on the body 258. As shown in Figure 24B, the sleeve member 272 may also include a first annular sealing surface 278
15 for cooperable sealing engagement with a second annular sealing surface 280 disposed about the central bore 260 of the valve body 258. In the same manner as discussed above in connection with Figures 17-23, the valve 256 is designed so that when the sleeve member 272 is being moved from an open position (not shown) to a closed position, as shown in Figures 24A-24C, the second valve seat
20 276 on the sleeve member 272 will come into contact with the first valve seat 264 on the valve body 258 before the first annular sealing surface 278 on the sleeve member 272 comes into contact with the second annular sealing surface 280 on the valve body 258.

The mechanism of this embodiment for remotely shifting the sleeve member 272 within the central bore 260 is electrically-operated, as will now be more fully explained. With reference to Figures 24A and 24B, an electrical conduit 282 having at least one electrical conductor 284 disposed therein is

5 connected between a remote source of electrical power (not shown), such as at the earth's surface (not shown), and the valve body 258, such as at fitting 286 (Figure 24B). The at least one electrical conductor 284 may be passed through a sealed electrical passageway 288 in the valve body 258 to a sealably enclosed annular space 290 in the valve body 258, where it is connected to an electric motor 292.

10 The electric motor 292 is attached to the valve body 258 and adapted to move the sleeve member 272 upon electrical actuation thereof. In a specific embodiment, the electric motor 292 may include, or be connected to, a threaded rod 294, or ball screw, a distal end 296 of which may be threadably received within a threaded cylinder 298 in a proximal end 300 of an actuating member 302. Referring to

15 Figure 24B, in a specific embodiment, the actuating member 300 may be a rod piston that is movably disposed within a lower cylinder 304 and an upper cylinder 306, both of which cylinders 304 and 306 may be disposed within the valve body 258. In a specific embodiment, the rod piston 300 may include a recess 308 in which a shoulder portion 310 of an annular end cap 312 may be received. In a

20 specific embodiment, the actuating member 300 may be an annular piston. The annular end cap 312 is connected, as by threads, to a lower end of the sleeve member 272. Referring to Figure 24C, the threaded rod 294 may be rotated in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction upon electrical actuation of the motor

292, thereby resulting in longitudinal movement of the threaded rod 294 within the threaded cylinder 298. This causes longitudinal movement of the rod piston 300 within the lower and upper cylinders 304 and 306, which results in longitudinal movement of the sleeve member 272 within the central bore 260. In this manner, fluid flow may be remotely regulated through the at least one flow port 262 in the valve body 258 and/or through the at least one flow slot 274 in the sleeve member 272.

In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figures 28 and 29, the valve 256 may also include a position indicator 314 that is connected to the at least one electrical conductor 284 and to the motor 292. The position indicator 314 will provide a signal to a control panel (not shown) at the earth's surface to indicate the position of the threaded rod 294, which will provide an indication to the operator at the earth's

surface of the distance between the first and second valve seats 264 and 276 (Figure 24A). This information will assist the operator in regulating fluid flow through the at least one flow port 262 in the valve body 258 and/or through the at least one flow slot 274 in the sleeve member 272. In a specific embodiment, the position indicator 314 may be a rotary variable differential transformer (RVDT). In a specific embodiment, the RVDT 314, the motor 292, and the threaded rod 294 may be an integral unit, of the type available from Astro Corp., of Dearfield, Florida, such as Model No. 800283. In another specific embodiment, the position indicator 314 may be an electromagnetic tachometer. In another specific embodiment, if the motor 292 is a stepper motor, the position

indicator 314 may be a step counter for counting the number of times the stepper motor 292 has been advanced. In another specific embodiment, the position indicator 314 may be an electrical resolver. In a specific embodiment, the valve 256 may further include an electronic module 316 connected between the electrical conductor 284 and the motor 292 to control operation thereof. The module 316 may include hard-wired circuitry, and/or a microprocessor and associated software.

Referring now to Figures 27 and 31, this embodiment of the present invention may also include a mechanism for compensating for temperature-induced pressure variations between pressures in the well annulus (not shown) and in the enclosed annular space 290, which may contain an incompressible fluid. As shown in Figure 31, the compensating mechanism may include a compensator housing 318 having a compensator cylinder 320 in which a compensator piston 322 is movably disposed. The compensator housing 318 may be connected to or a part of the valve body 258. A first side 324 of the compensator piston 322 is in fluid communication with the well annulus, such as through an aperture 325, and a second side 326 of the compensator piston 322 is in fluid communication with the enclosed space 290. As the valve experiences fluctuations in temperature and pressure, the compensator piston 322 will move within the compensator cylinder 320 to maintain equilibrium between annulus pressure and the pressure in the enclosed space 290.

Whereas the present invention has been described in particular relation to the drawings attached hereto, it is to be understood that the invention is not

limited to the exact details of construction, operation, exact materials or embodiments shown and described, as obvious modifications and equivalents will be apparent to one skilled in the art. Accordingly, the invention is therefore to be limited only by the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

- 1 1. A selectively operable flow control device for regulating
2 fluid flow in a well, comprising:
3 a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at
4 least one flow port, and a first valve seat;
5 a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the
6 body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for
7 cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat;
8 a piston connected to the sleeve member and movably disposed
9 within the central bore of the body member in response to
10 application of pressurized fluid;
11 a first and a second hydraulic conduit connected between a source
12 of pressurized fluid and the body member, the first
13 hydraulic conduit being in fluid communication with a first
14 side of the piston, and the second hydraulic conduit being
15 in fluid communication with a second side of the piston;
16 and
17 a position holder cooperably engageable with a retaining member,
18 one of the position holder and the retaining member being
19 connected to the sleeve member, and the other of the
20 position holder and the retaining member being connected
21 to the body member.

1 2. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the sleeve
2 member further includes at least one flow slot.

1 3. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the position
2 holder includes a recessed profile in which a portion of the retaining member is
3 engaged and movably disposed to hold the sleeve member in a plurality of
4 discrete positions.

1 4. The flow control device of claim 3, wherein the recessed
2 profile includes a plurality of axial slots of varying lengths disposed
3 circumferentially about the position holder and in substantially parallel
4 relationship, each axial slot having a recessed portion and an elevated portion,
5 and each axial slot being connected to its immediately neighboring axial slots by
6 ramped slots leading between corresponding recessed and elevated portions of
7 each neighboring axial slot.

1 5. The flow control device of claim 3, wherein the recessed
2 profile is disposed in an indexing cylinder rotatably disposed about the sleeve
3 member.

1 6. The flow control device of claim 5, wherein the indexing
2 cylinder and the sleeve member are adapted to restrict longitudinal movement
3 therebetween.

1 7. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the retaining
2 member includes an elongate body having a cam finger at a distal end thereof
3 engaged with and movably disposed within a recessed profile in the position
4 holder, and a proximal end of the elongate body being hingedly attached to one of
5 the sleeve member and body member.

1 8. The flow control device of claim 1, further including
2 means for biasing the retaining member into engagement with the position holder.

1 9. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the retaining
2 member is a spring-loaded detent pin.

1 10. The flow control device of claim 1, further including
2 means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second
3 valve seats towards each other.

1 11. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the piston is
2 an annular piston.

1 12. The flow control device of claim 1, wherein the piston is at
2 least one rod piston.

1 13. A selectively operable flow control device for regulating
2 fluid flow in a well, comprising:
3 a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at
4 least one flow port, and a first valve seat;
5 a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the
6 body member, having a second valve seat adapted for
7 cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat,
8 and being biased towards the first valve seat;
9 a piston connected to the sleeve member and movably disposed
10 within a cylinder in the body member in response to
11 application of pressurized fluid;
12 a hydraulic conduit in fluid communication with a source of
13 pressurized fluid and a first side of the piston; and
14 a position holder cooperably engageable with a retaining member,
15 one of the position holder and the retaining member being
16 connected to the piston, and the other of the position holder
17 and the retaining member being connected to the body
18 member.

1 14. The flow control device of claim **13**, further including
2 means for biasing the sleeve member and the second valve seat towards the first
3 valve seat.

1 15. The flow control device of claim **14**, wherein the biasing
2 means includes pressurized gas.

1 16. The flow control device of claim **15**, further including a
2 gas conduit containing at least a portion of the pressurized gas.

1 17. The flow control device of claim **15**, further including a
2 charging port connected to the body member through which pressurized gas is
3 loaded into the device.

1 18. The flow control device of claim **14**, wherein the biasing
2 means includes a spring.

1 19. The flow control device of claim **14**, wherein the biasing
2 means includes pressure in a well annulus.

1 20. The flow control device of claim **13**, wherein the first valve
2 seat is slidably disposed within the central bore and about the sleeve member, and
3 movable between a first position and a second position.

1 21. The flow control device of claim **20**, wherein the first valve
2 seat is biased towards its first position by a spring.

1 22. The flow control device of claim **21**, wherein the spring is
2 compressed between a shoulder in the central bore and the first valve seat.

1 23. The flow control device of claim **13**, wherein the sleeve
2 member includes a first annular sealing surface for cooperable sealing
3 engagement with a second annular sealing surface on the central bore, the second
4 valve seat on the sleeve member being engageable with the first valve seat on the
5 body before the first and second annular sealing surfaces are engageable.

1 24. The flow control device of claim **13**, wherein the sleeve
2 member further includes at least one flow slot.

1 25. The flow control device of claim **13**, wherein the piston
2 includes a first recess in which a shoulder portion of an annular end cap is
3 received, the end cap being secured to the sleeve member.

1 26. The flow control device of claim **13**, wherein the position
2 holder includes a recessed profile in which a portion of the retaining member is
3 engaged and movably disposed to hold the sleeve member in a plurality of
4 discrete positions.

1 27. The flow control device of claim **26**, wherein the recessed
2 profile includes a plurality of axial slots of varying lengths disposed

3 circumferentially about the position holder and in substantially parallel
4 relationship, each axial slot having a recessed portion and an elevated portion,
5 and each axial slot being connected to its immediately neighboring axial slots by
6 ramped slots leading between corresponding recessed and elevated portions of
7 each neighboring axial slot.

1 28. The flow control device of claim 26, wherein the recessed
2 profile is disposed in an indexing cylinder rotatably disposed within a sealably
3 enclosed annular space in the body member.

1 29. The flow control device of claim 28, wherein the indexing
2 cylinder includes a flange received within a second recess in the piston.

1 30. The flow control device of claim 13, wherein the retaining
2 member includes an elongate body having a cam finger at a distal end thereof
3 engaged with and movably disposed within a recessed profiled in the position
4 holder, and a proximal end of the elongate body being hingedly attached to one of
5 the piston and the body member.

1 31. The flow control device of claim 13, further including
2 means for biasing the retaining member into engagement with the position holder.

1 32. The flow control device of claim 13, wherein the retaining
2 member is a spring-loaded detent pin.

1 33. The flow control device of claim 13, further including
2 means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second
3 valve seats towards each other.

1 34. The flow control device of claim 13, wherein the piston is
2 an annular piston.

1 35. The flow control device of claim 13, wherein the piston is
2 at least one rod piston.

1 36. A selectively operable flow control device for regulating
2 fluid flow in a well, comprising:
3 a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at
4 least one flow port, and a first valve seat;
5 a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the
6 body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for
7 cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat;
8
9 an electric motor connected to the body member and adapted to
10 move the sleeve member longitudinally within the central

11 bore of the body member upon electrical actuation thereof;
12 and
13 an electrical conductor connected between a source of electricity
14 and the motor.

1 37. The flow control device of claim 36, further including an
2 actuating member connected between the sleeve member and the motor.

1 38. The flow control device of claim 37, wherein the actuating
2 member includes a piston movably disposed within a cylinder in the body
3 member.

1 39. The flow control device of claim 38, wherein the motor
2 further includes a threaded rod, and the piston further includes a threaded
3 cylinder, the threaded rod being threadably disposed for longitudinal movement
4 within the threaded cylinder.

1 40. The flow control device of claim 38, wherein the piston
2 includes a first recess in which a shoulder portion of an annular end cap is
3 received, the end cap being secured to the sleeve member.

1 41. The flow control device of claim 38, wherein the piston is
2 an annular piston.

1 42. The flow control device of claim 38, wherein the piston is
2 at least one rod piston.

1 43. The flow control device of claim 36, wherein the electric
2 motor is disposed in a sealably enclosed space in the body member, and the
3 device further includes a compensator piston movably disposed within a
4 compensator cylinder in the body member, a first side of the compensator piston
5 being in fluid communication with a well annulus, and a second side of the
6 compensator piston being in fluid communication with the enclosed space.

1 44. The flow control device of claim 36, further including
2 means connected to the electric motor for providing a signal to a control panel
3 indicating a distance between the first and second valve seats.

1 45. The flow control device of claim 36, wherein the first valve
2 seat is slidably disposed within the central bore and about the sleeve member, and
3 movable between a first position and a second position.

1 46. The flow control device of claim 45, wherein the first valve
2 seat is biased towards its first position by a spring.

1 47. The flow control device of claim 46, wherein the spring is
2 compressed between a shoulder in the central bore and the first valve seat.

1 48. The flow control device of claim 36, wherein the sleeve
2 member includes a first annular sealing surface for cooperable sealing
3 engagement with a second annular sealing surface on the central bore, the second
4 valve seat on the sleeve member being engageable with the first valve seat on the
5 body before the first and second annular sealing surfaces are engageable.

1 49. The flow control device of claim 36, wherein the sleeve
2 member further includes at least one flow slot.

1 50. The flow control device of claim 36, further including
2 means for causing pressure within a well annulus to force the first and second
3 valve seats towards each other.

1 51. A selectively operable flow control device for regulating fluid
2 flow in a well, comprising:
3 a body member having a central bore extending therethrough, at least
4 one flow port, and a first valve seat;
5 a sleeve member movably disposed within the central bore of the
6 body member, and having a second valve seat adapted for
7 cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat;
8 means for selectively controlling movement of the sleeve member to
9 regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port; and
10 conduit means for transmitting energy to the movement means.

42/42

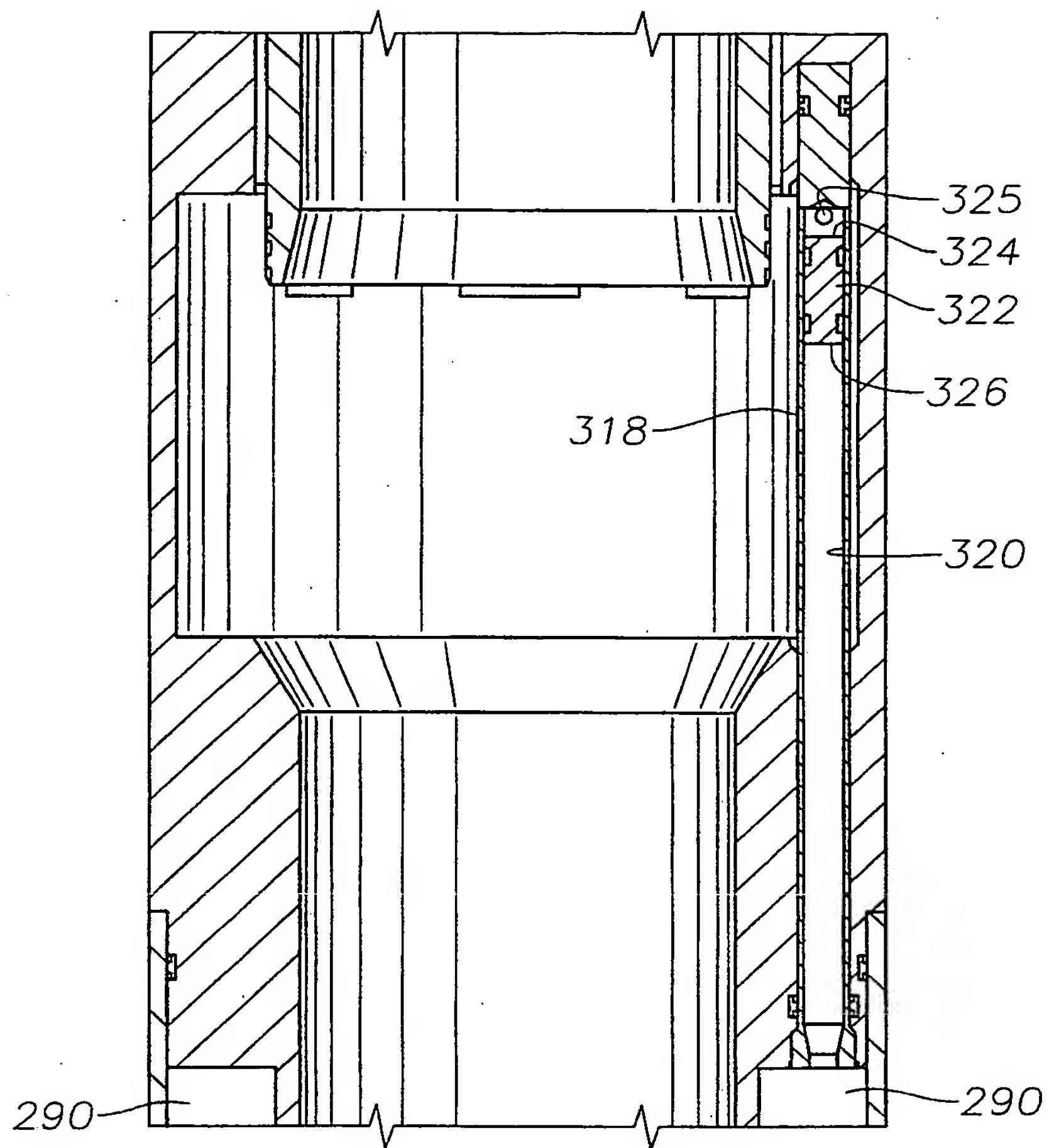


Fig. 31

41/42

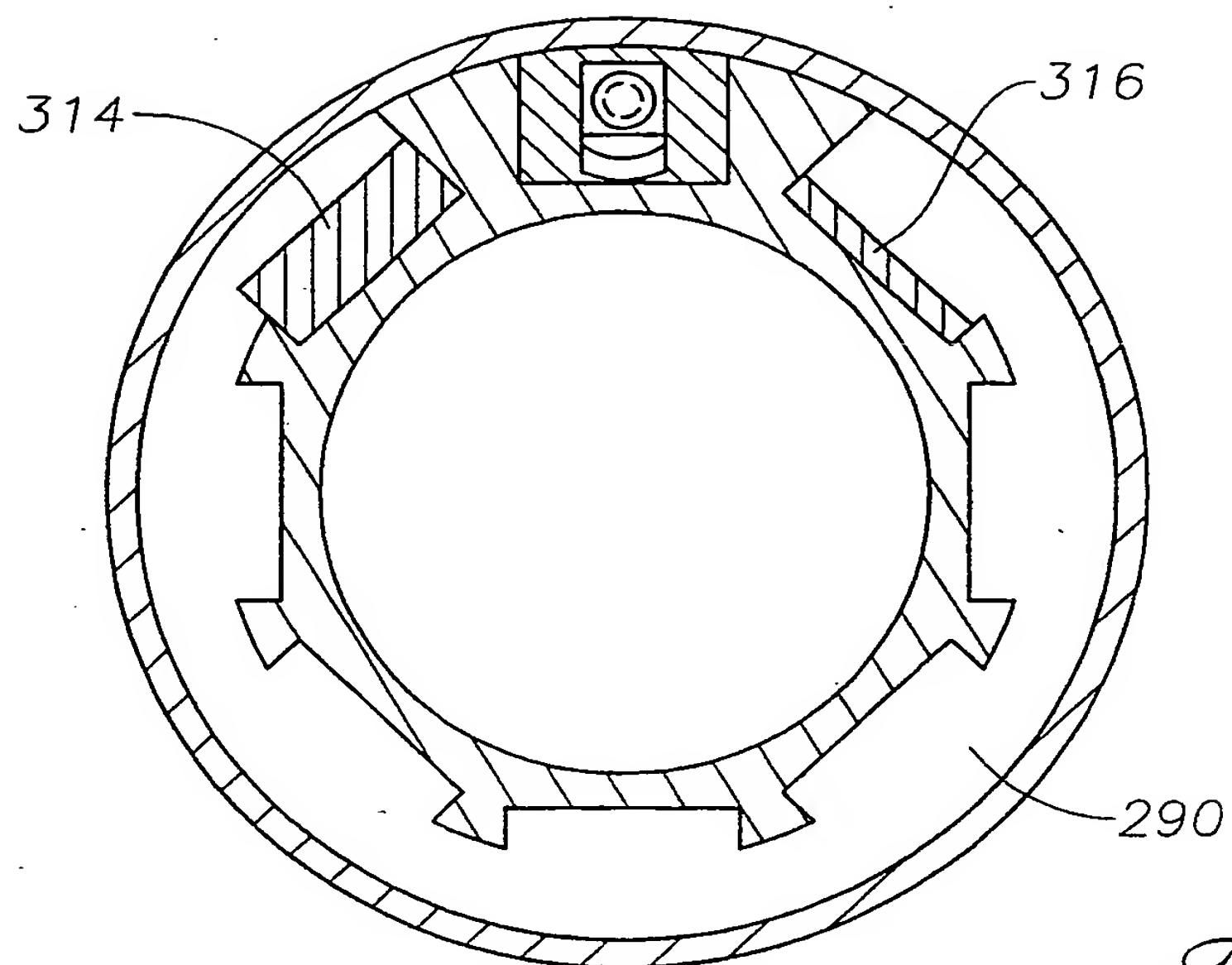


Fig. 29

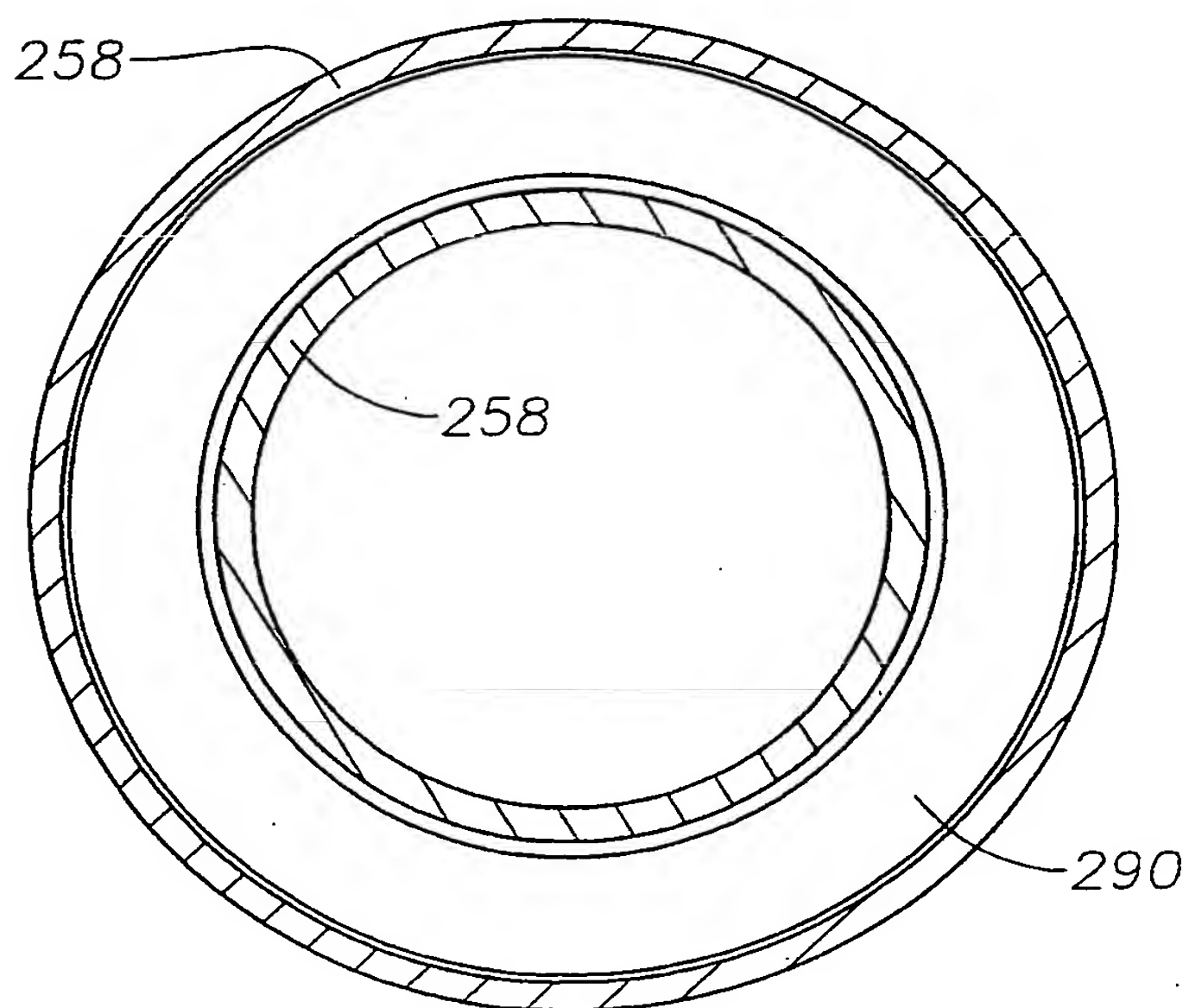
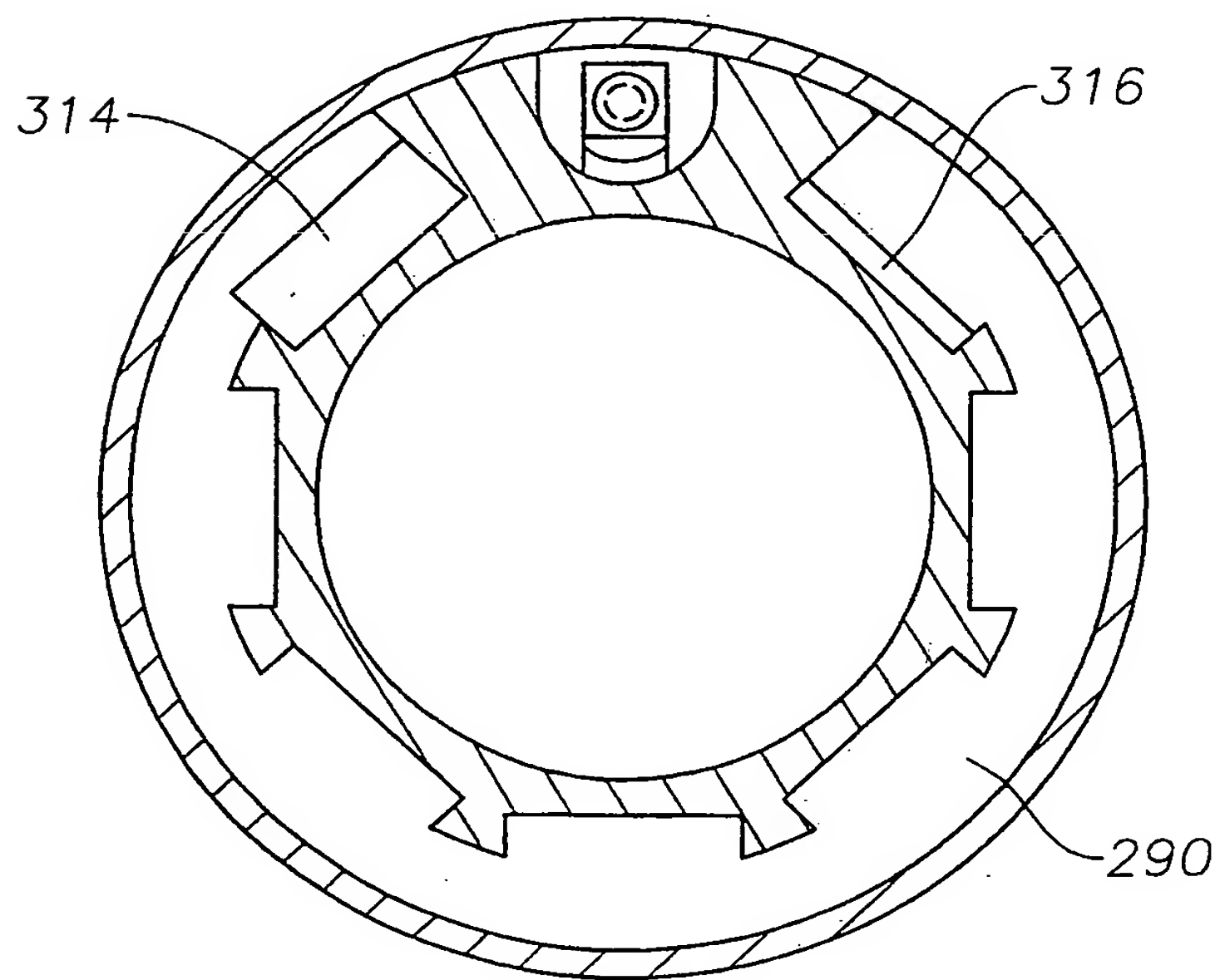
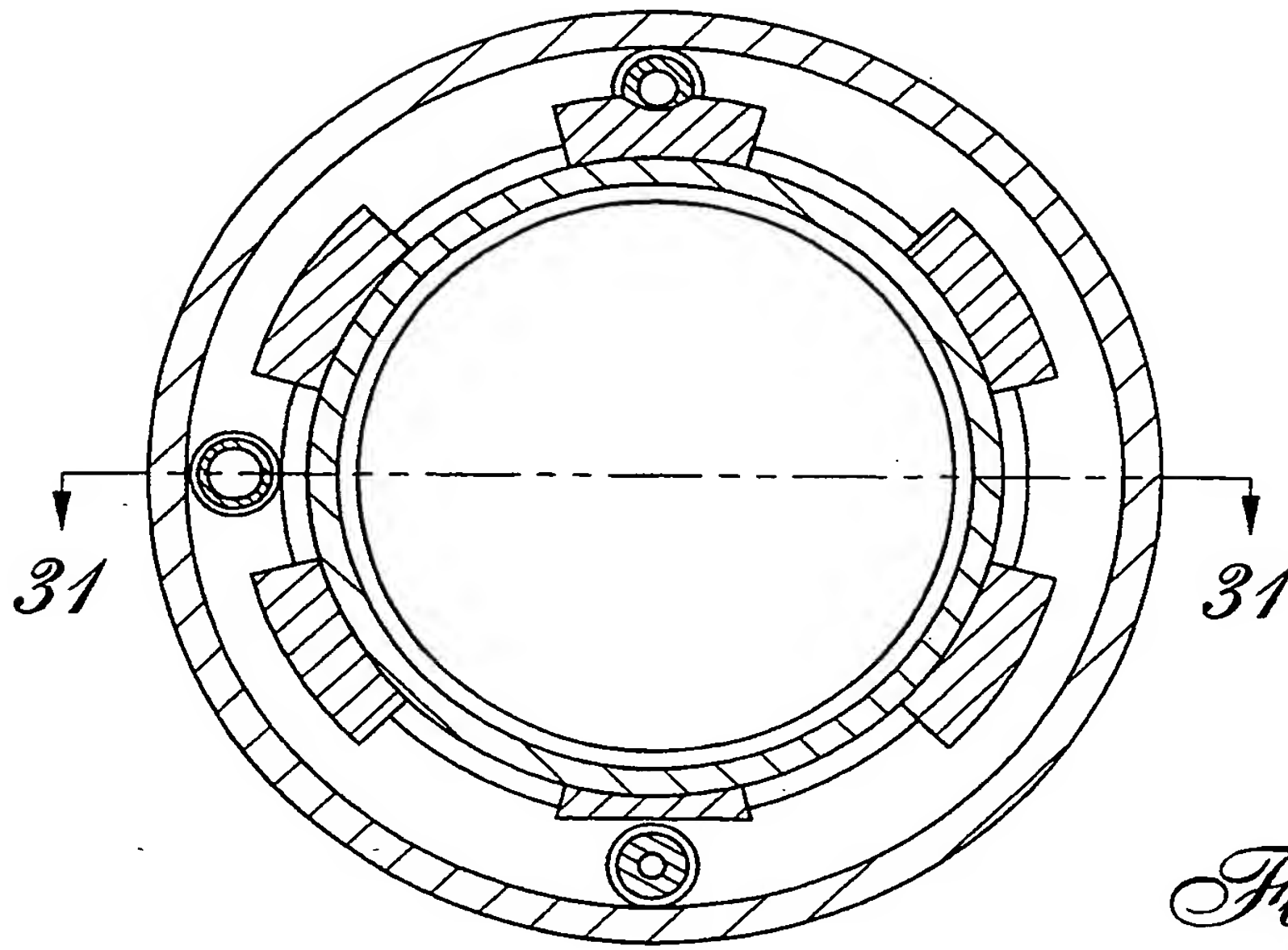


Fig. 30

40/42



39/42

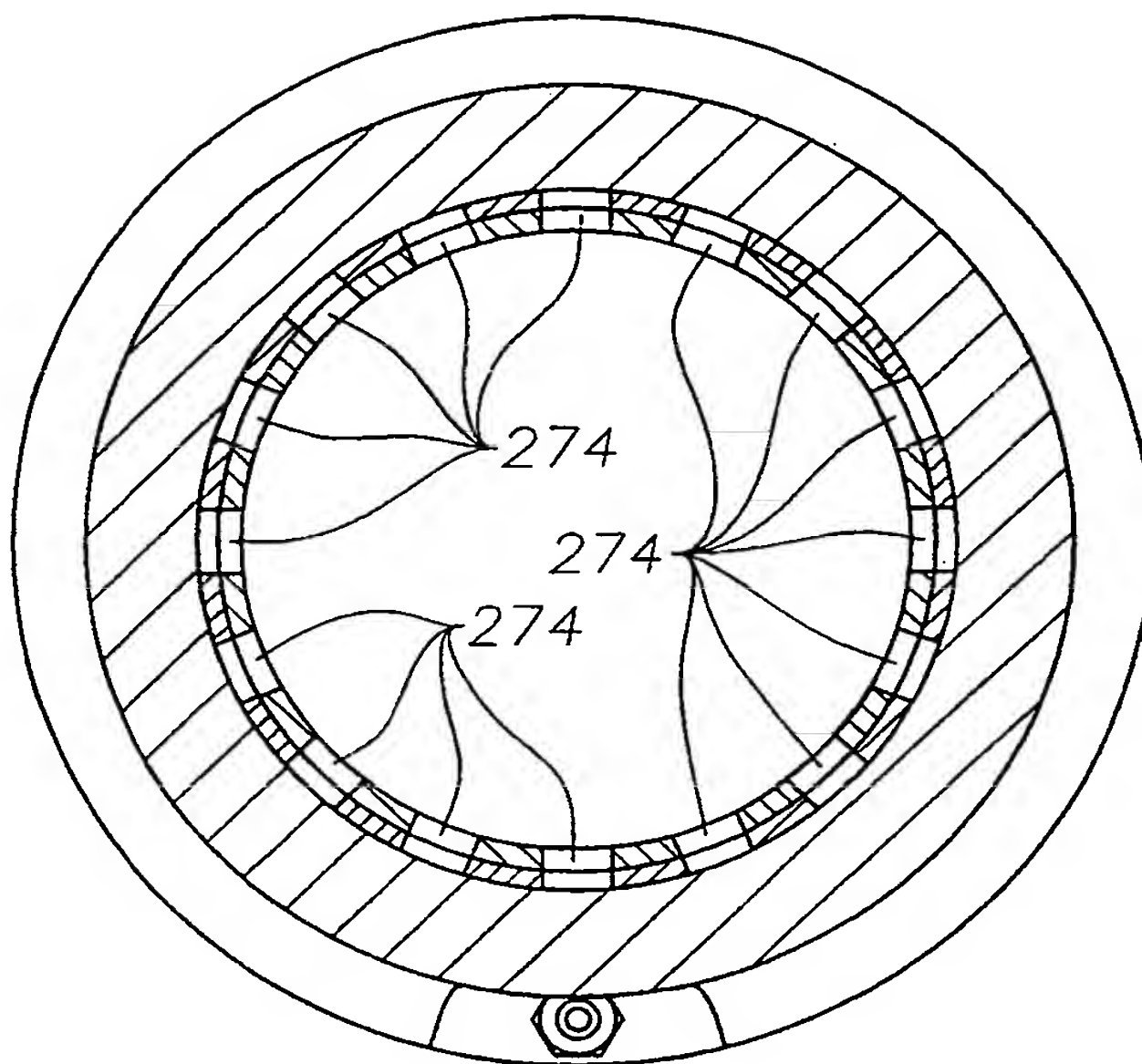


Fig. 25

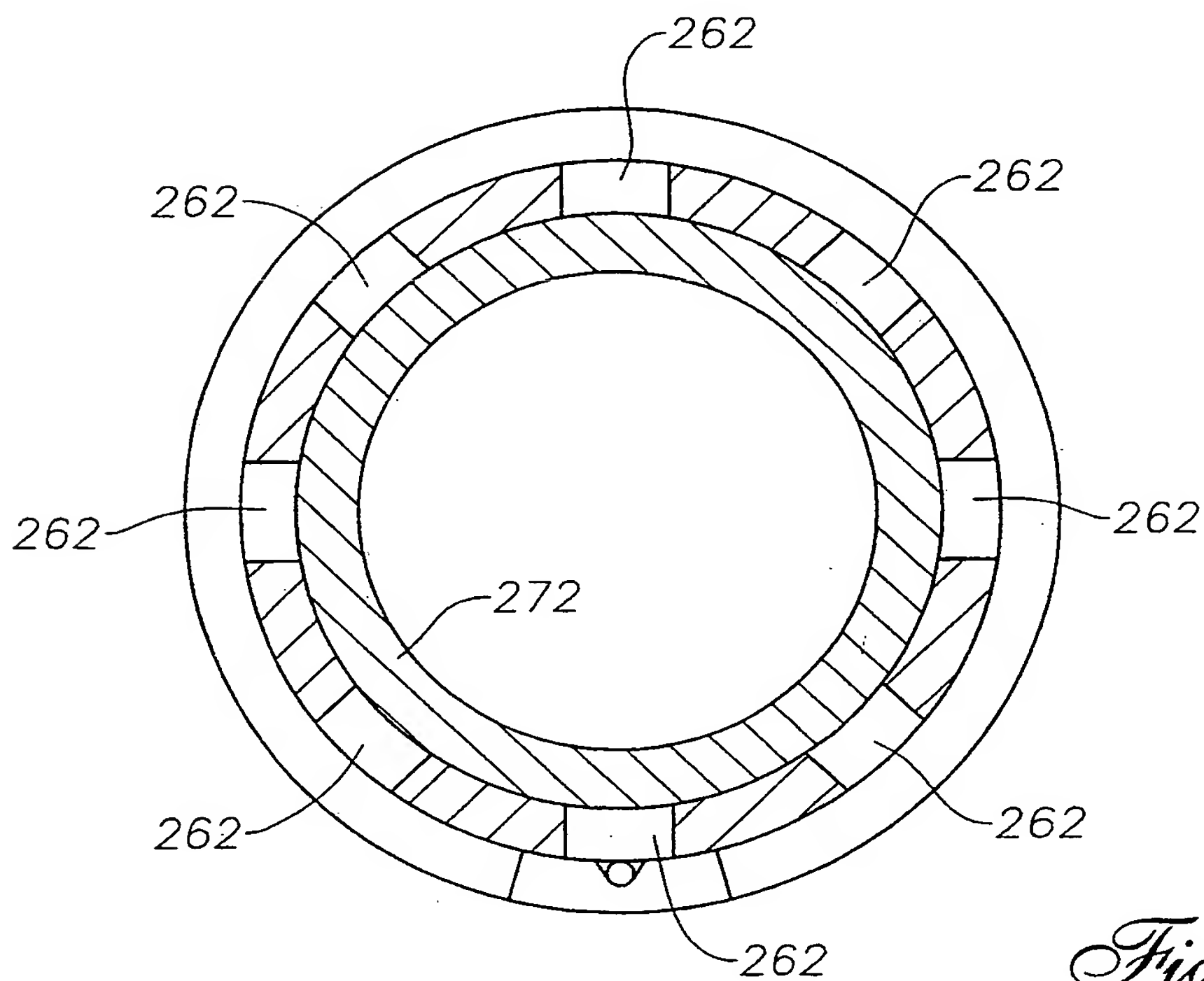


Fig. 26

38/42

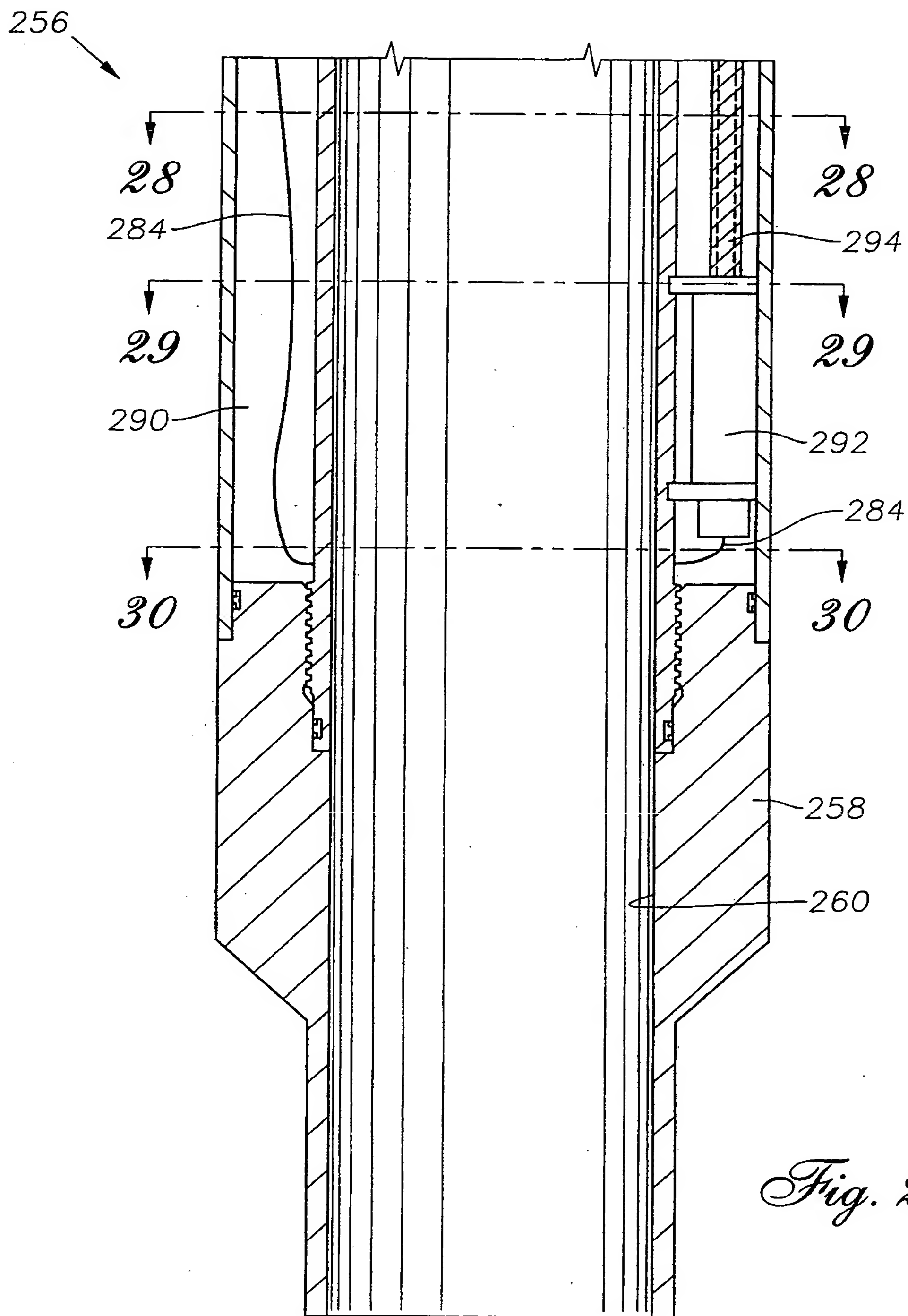


Fig. 24d

37/42

Fig. 24c

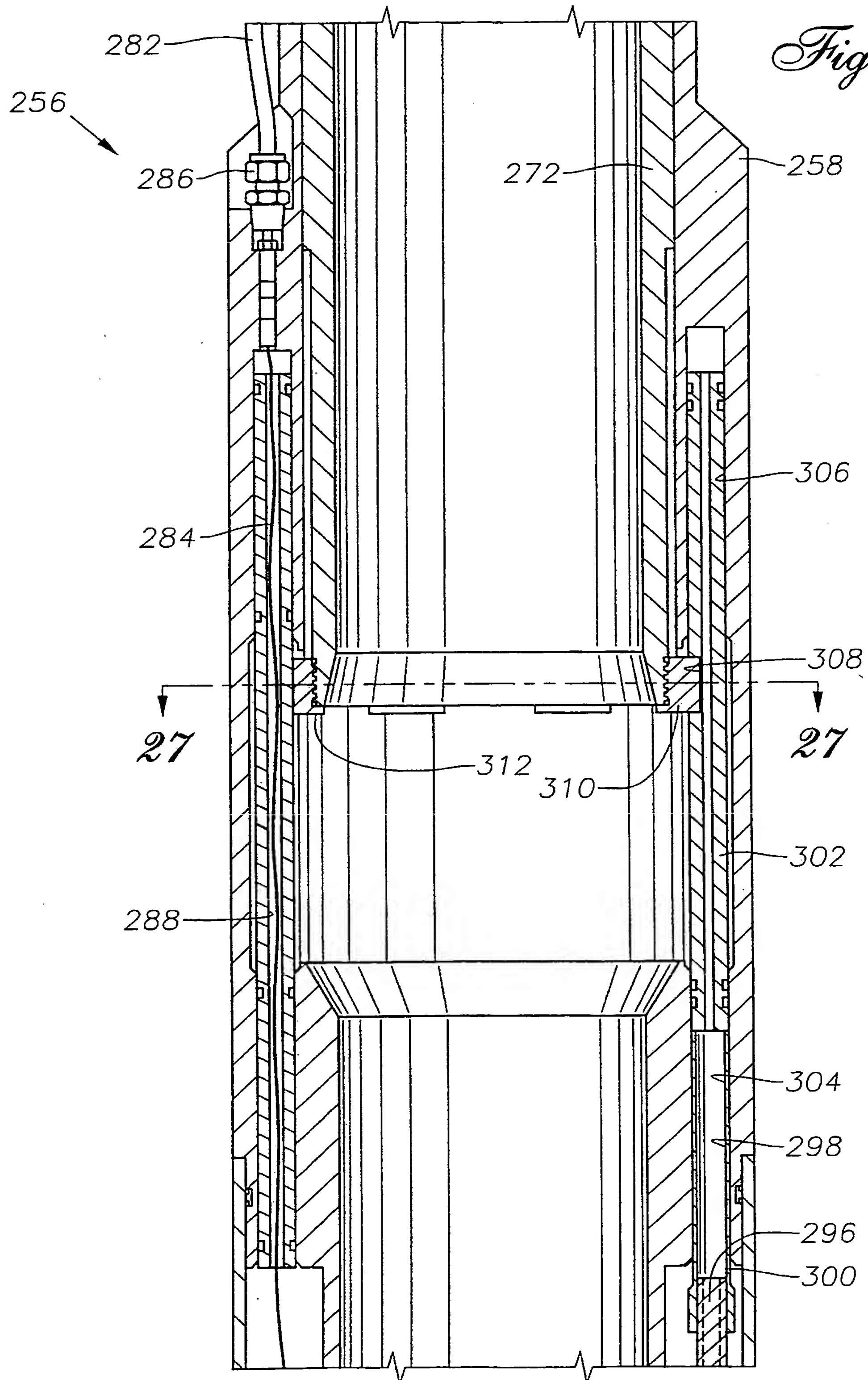


Fig. 24b

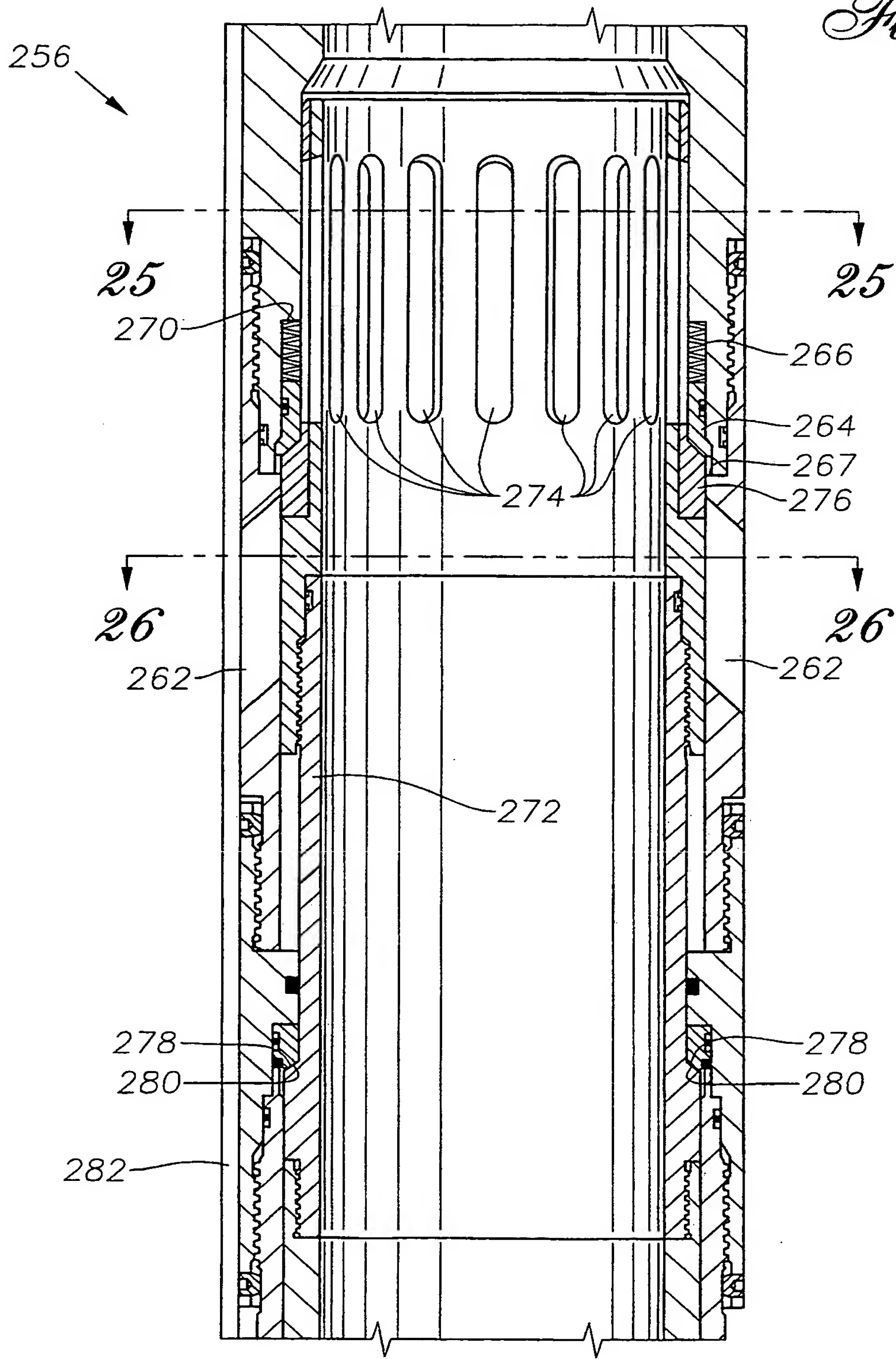
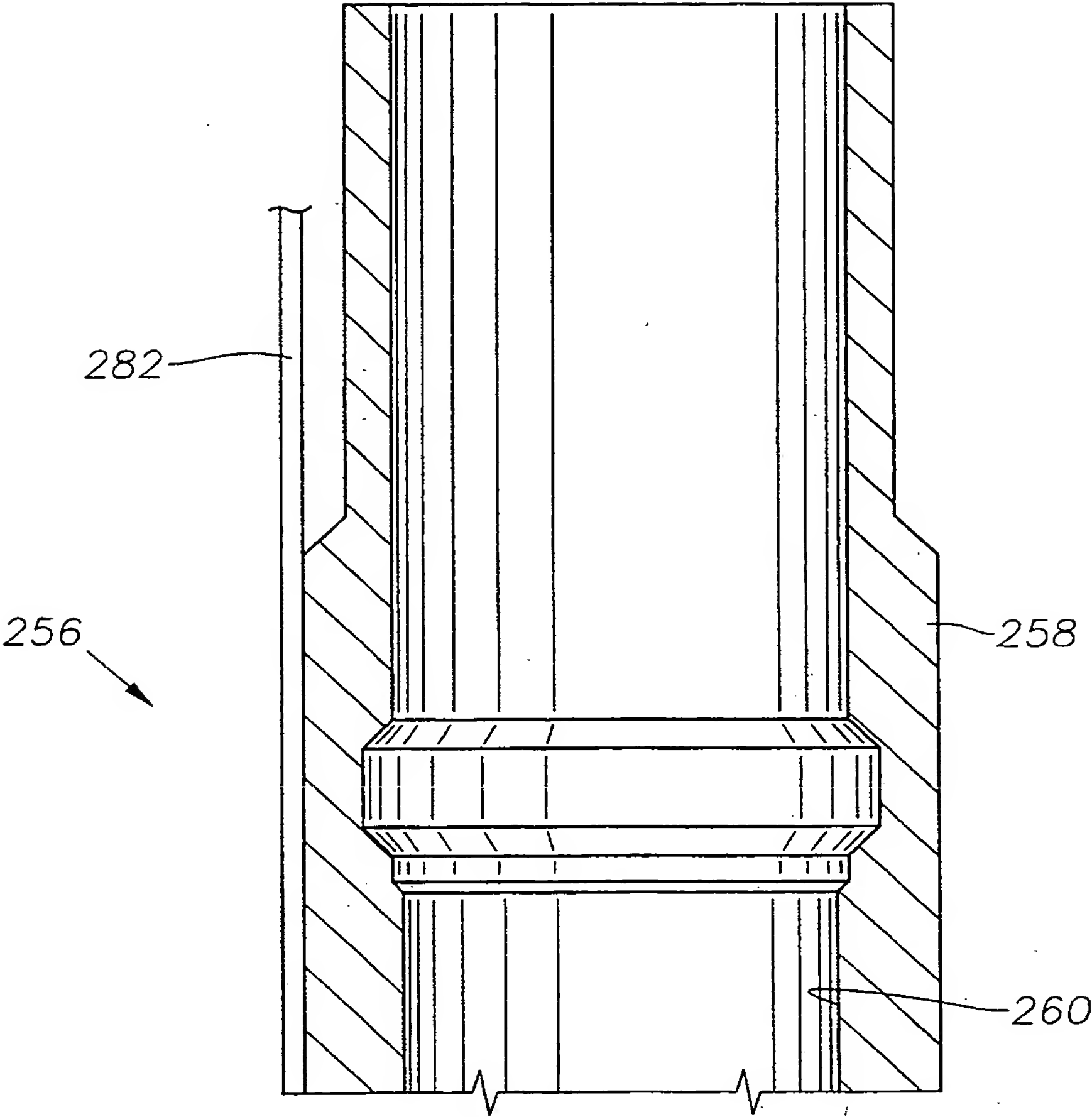


Fig. 24a



34/42

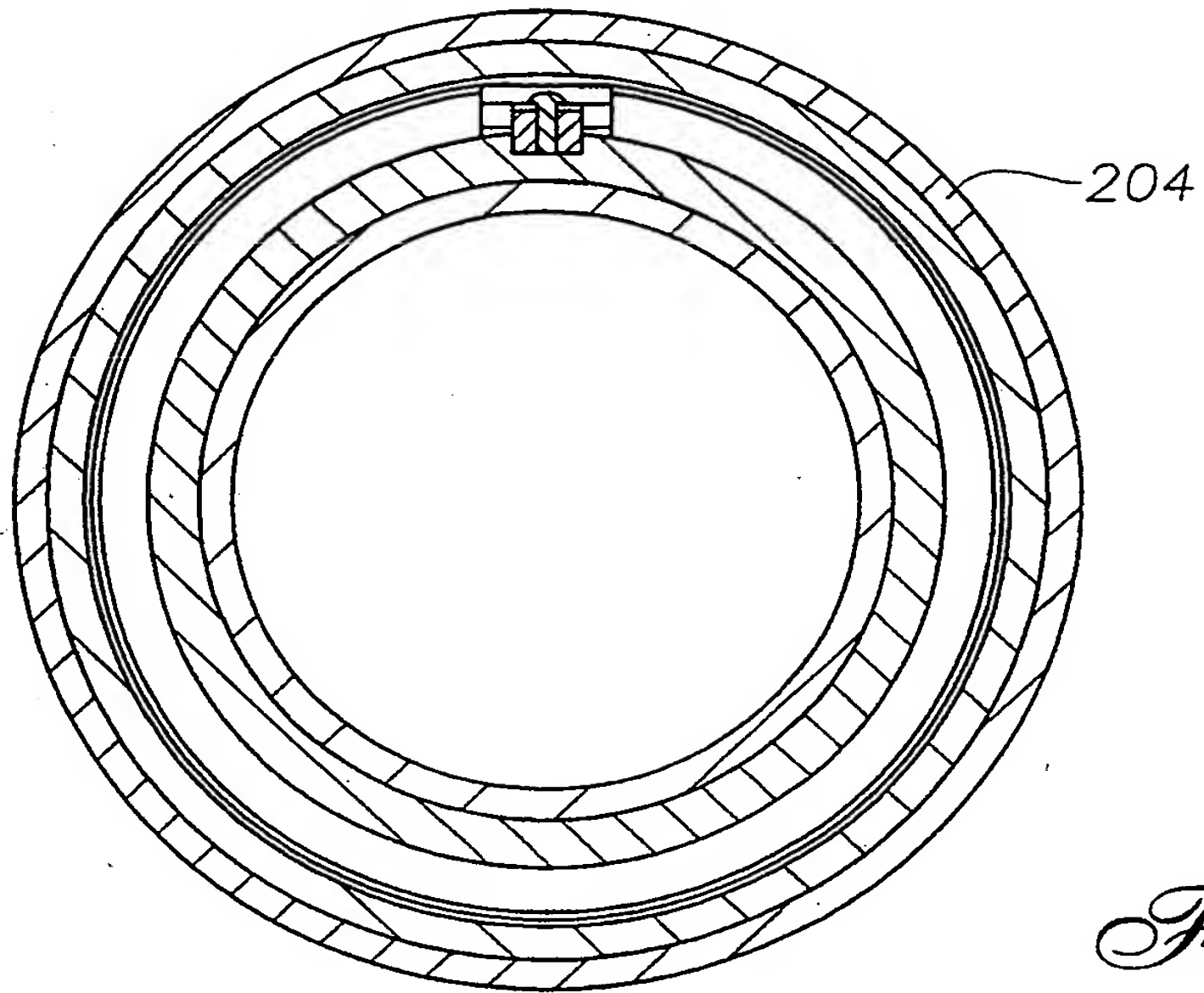


Fig. 22

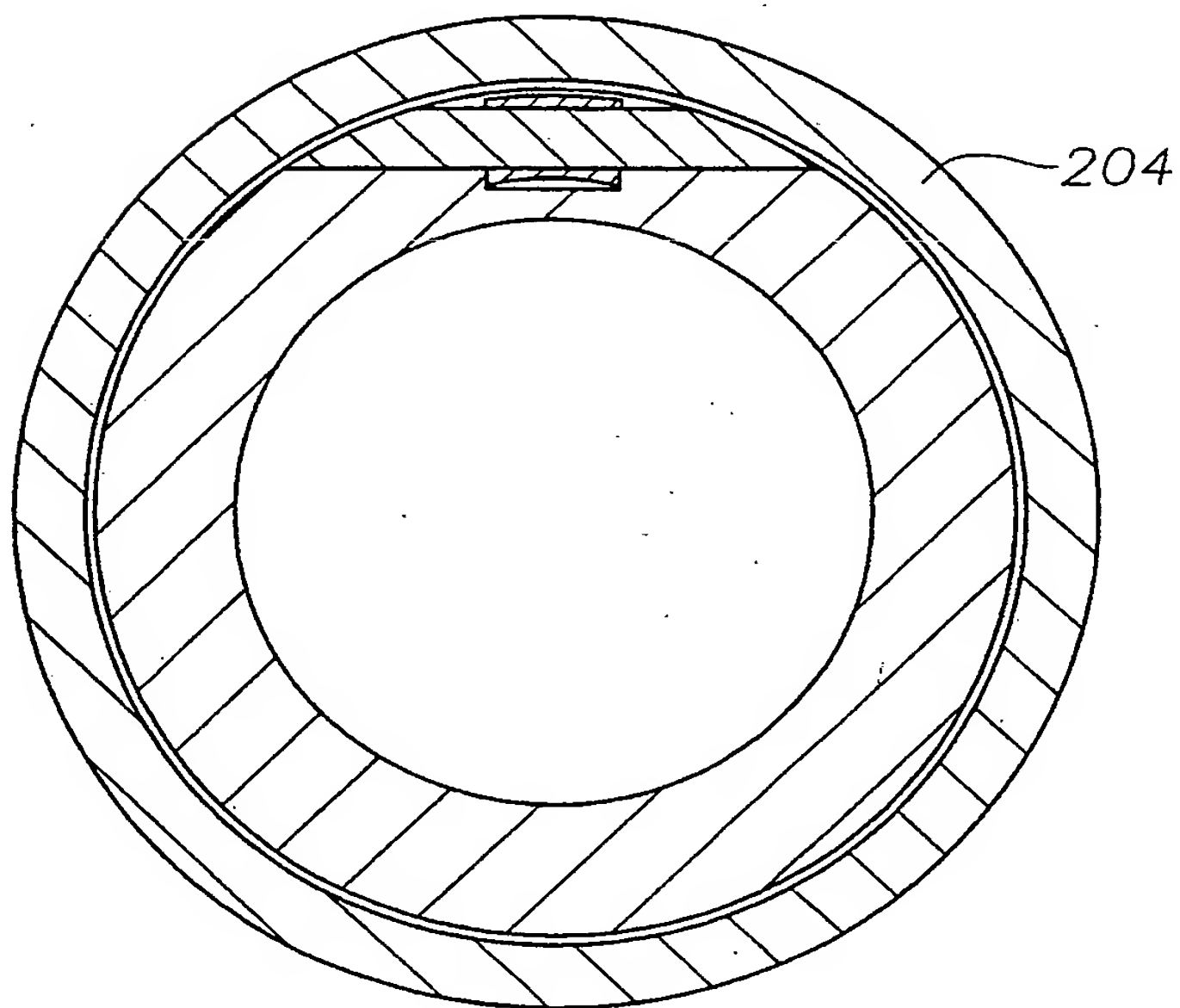


Fig. 23

33/42

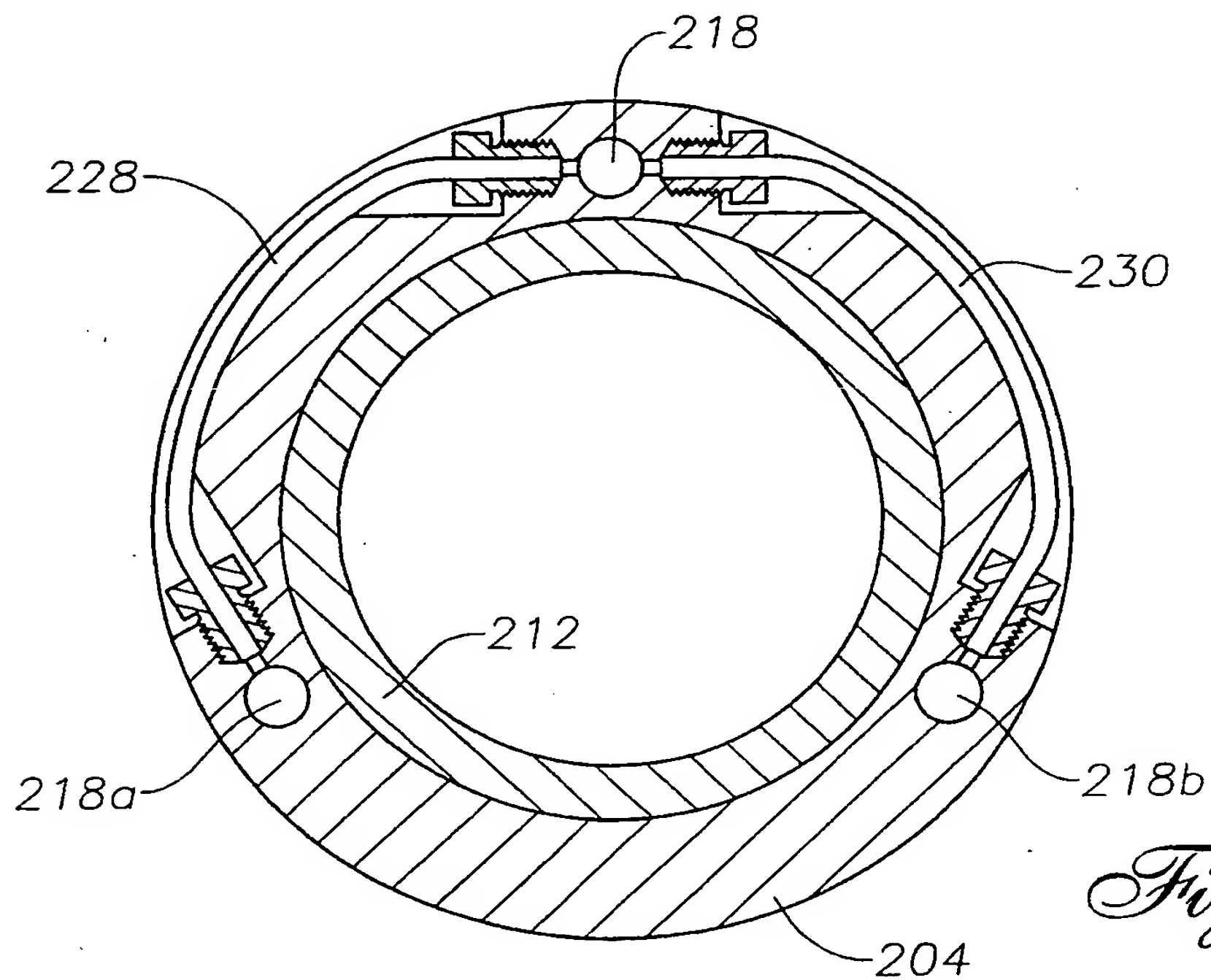


Fig. 20

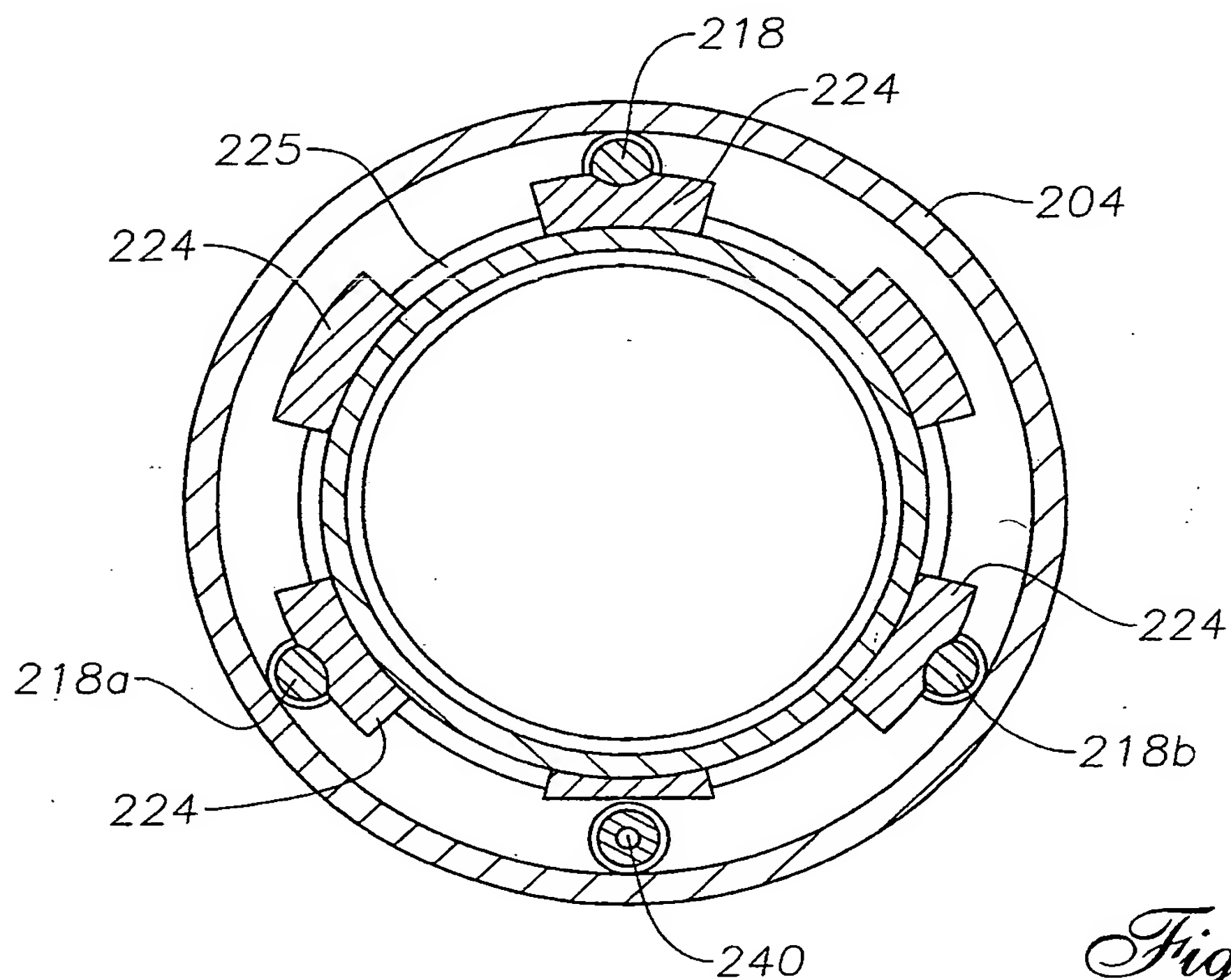


Fig. 21

32/42

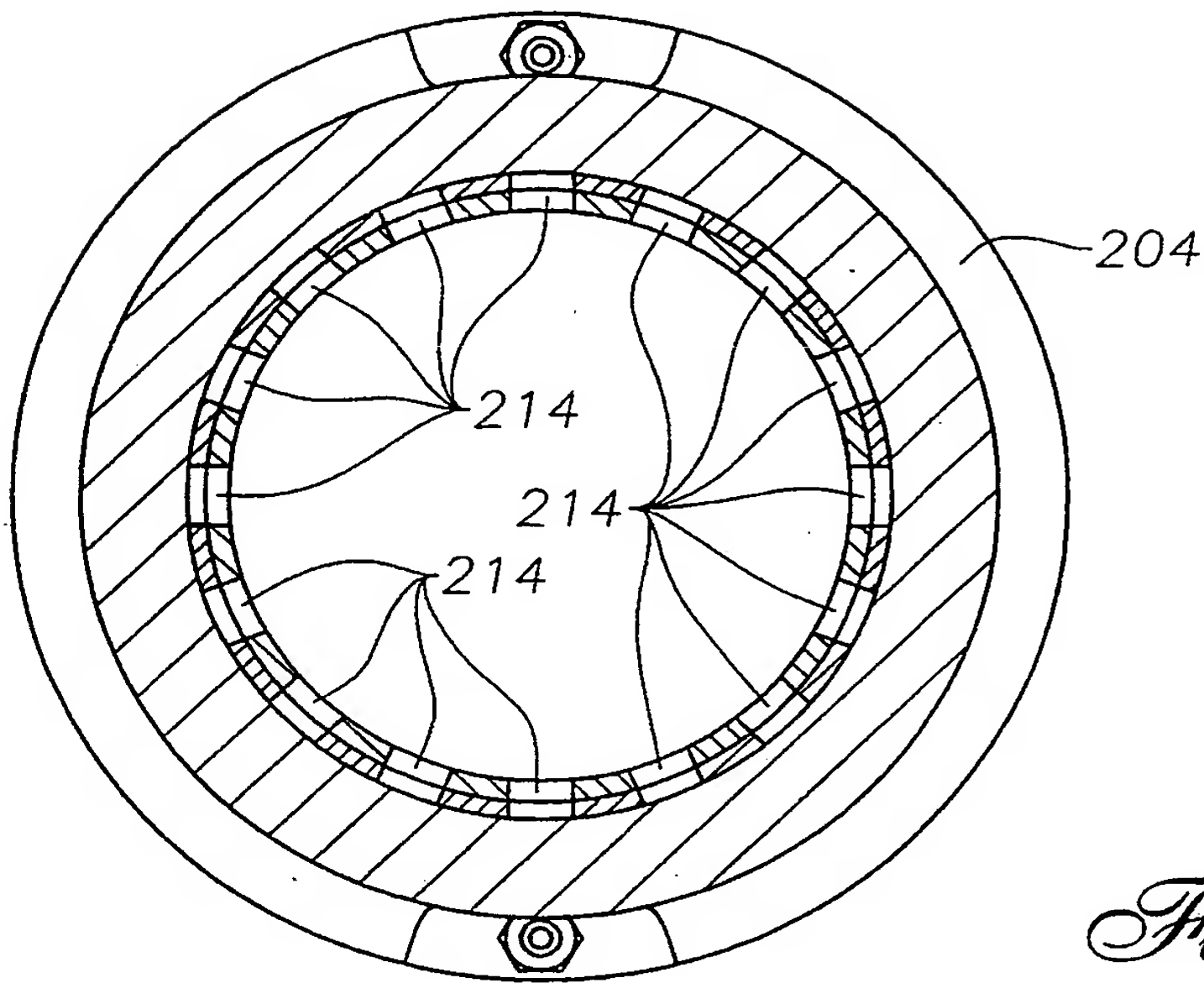


Fig. 18

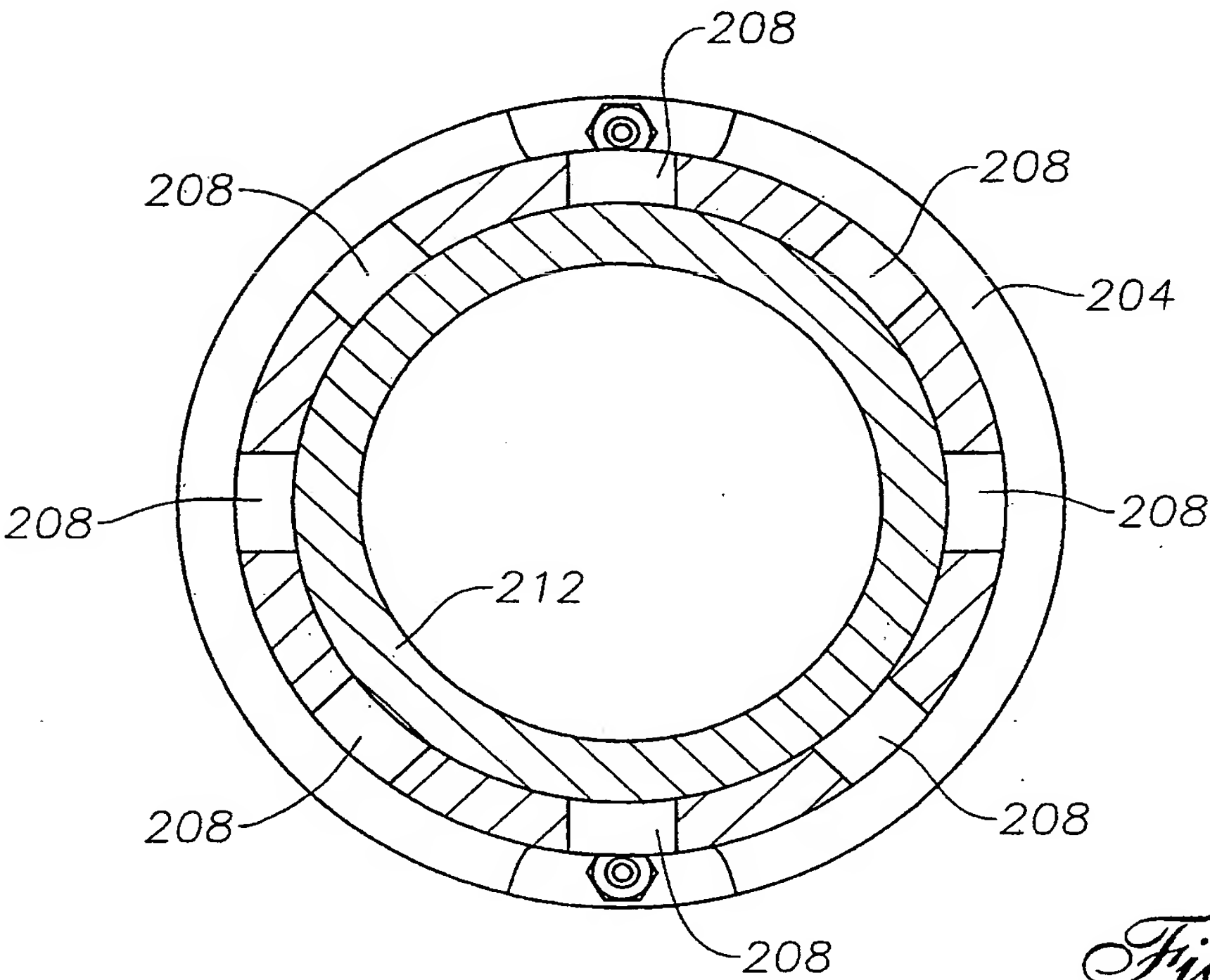


Fig. 19

31/42

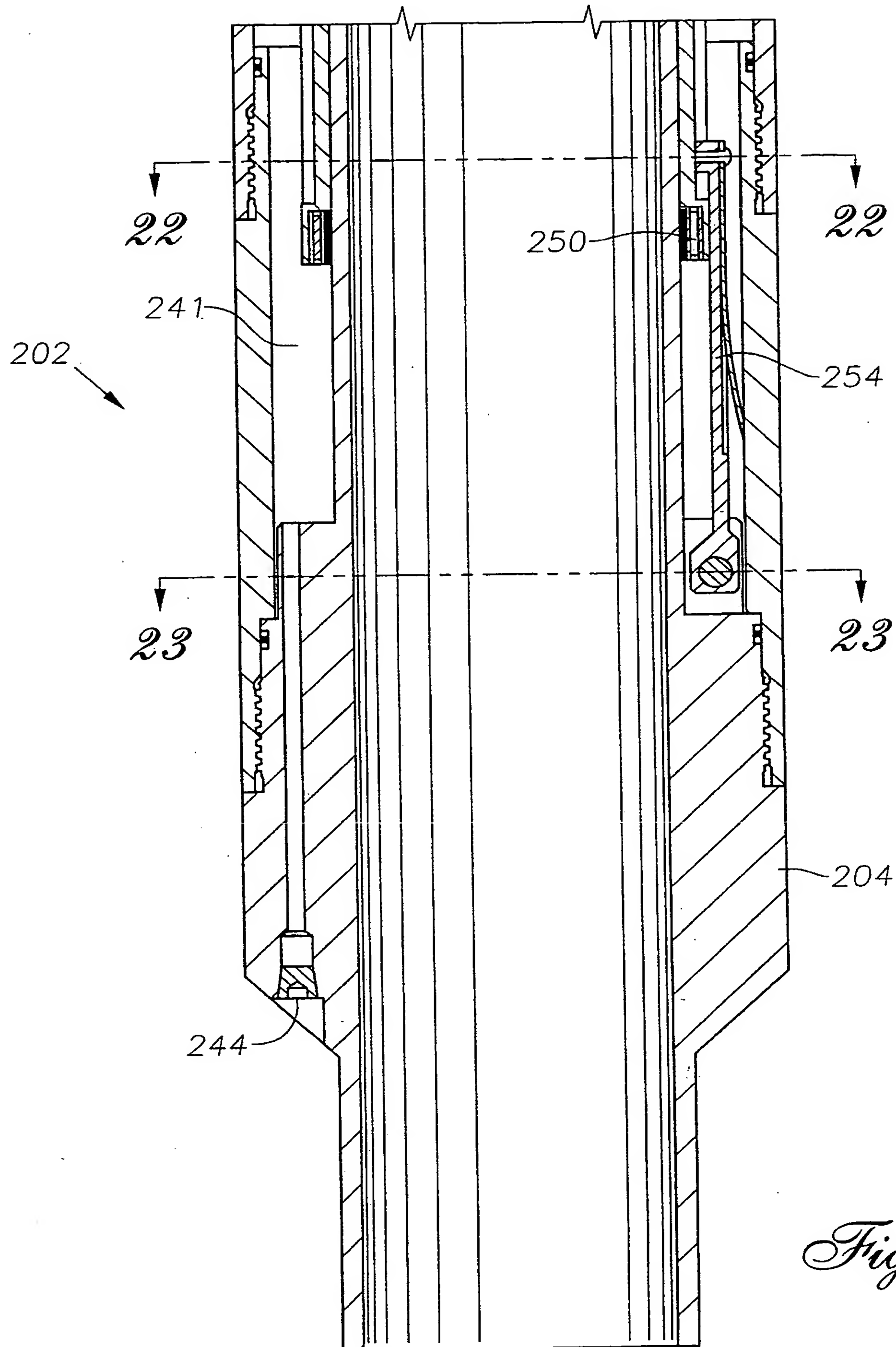


Fig. 17e

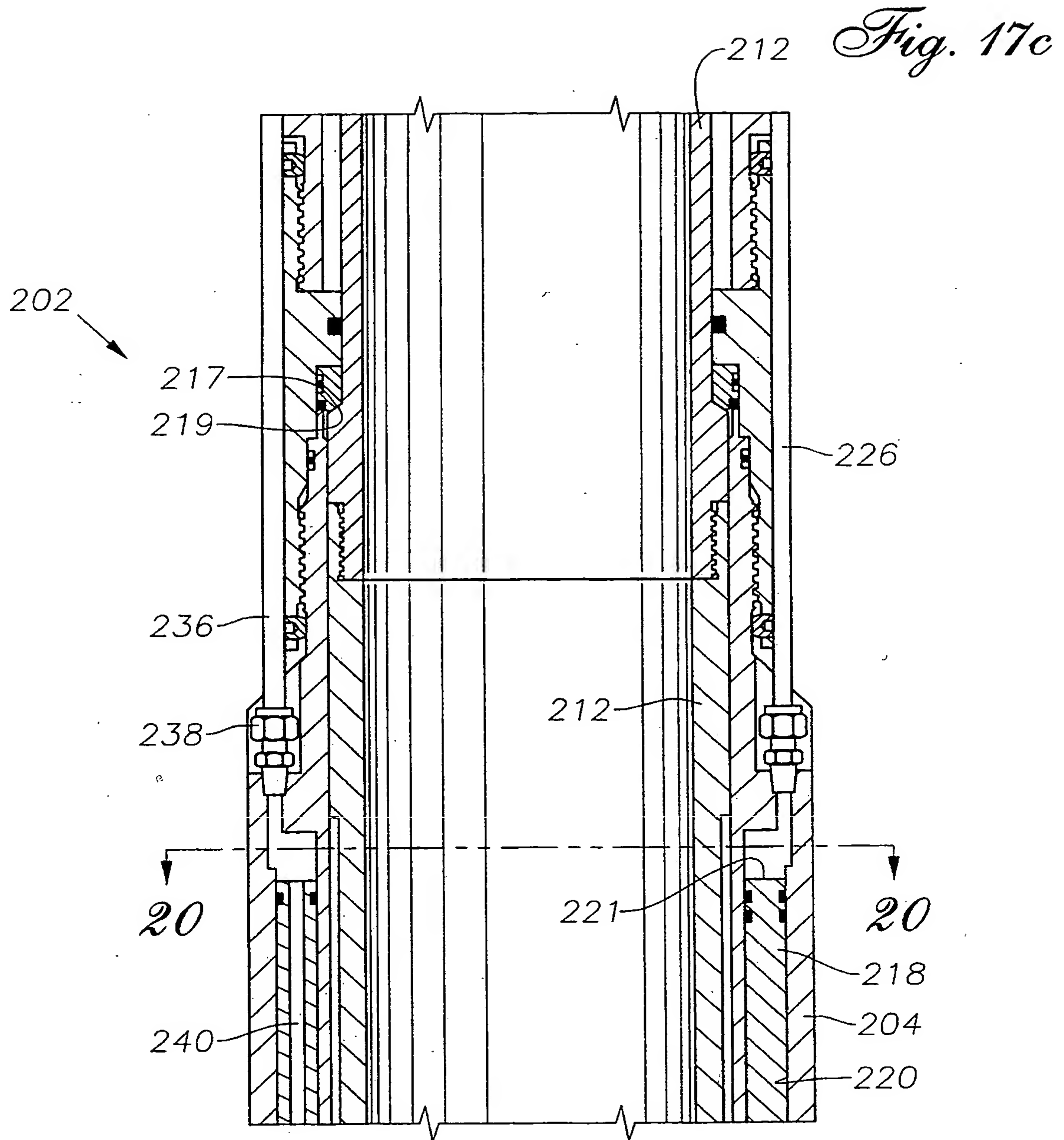
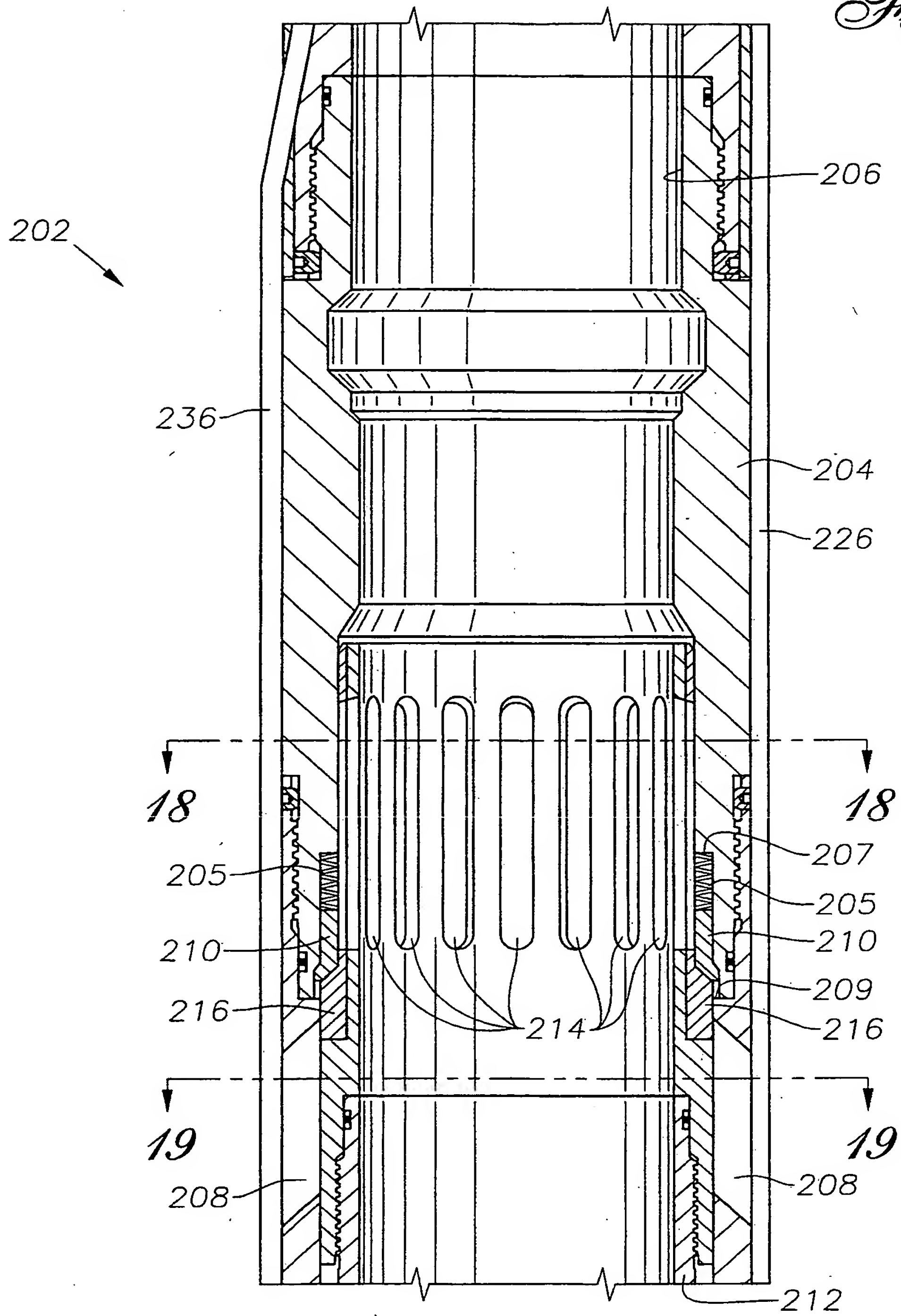
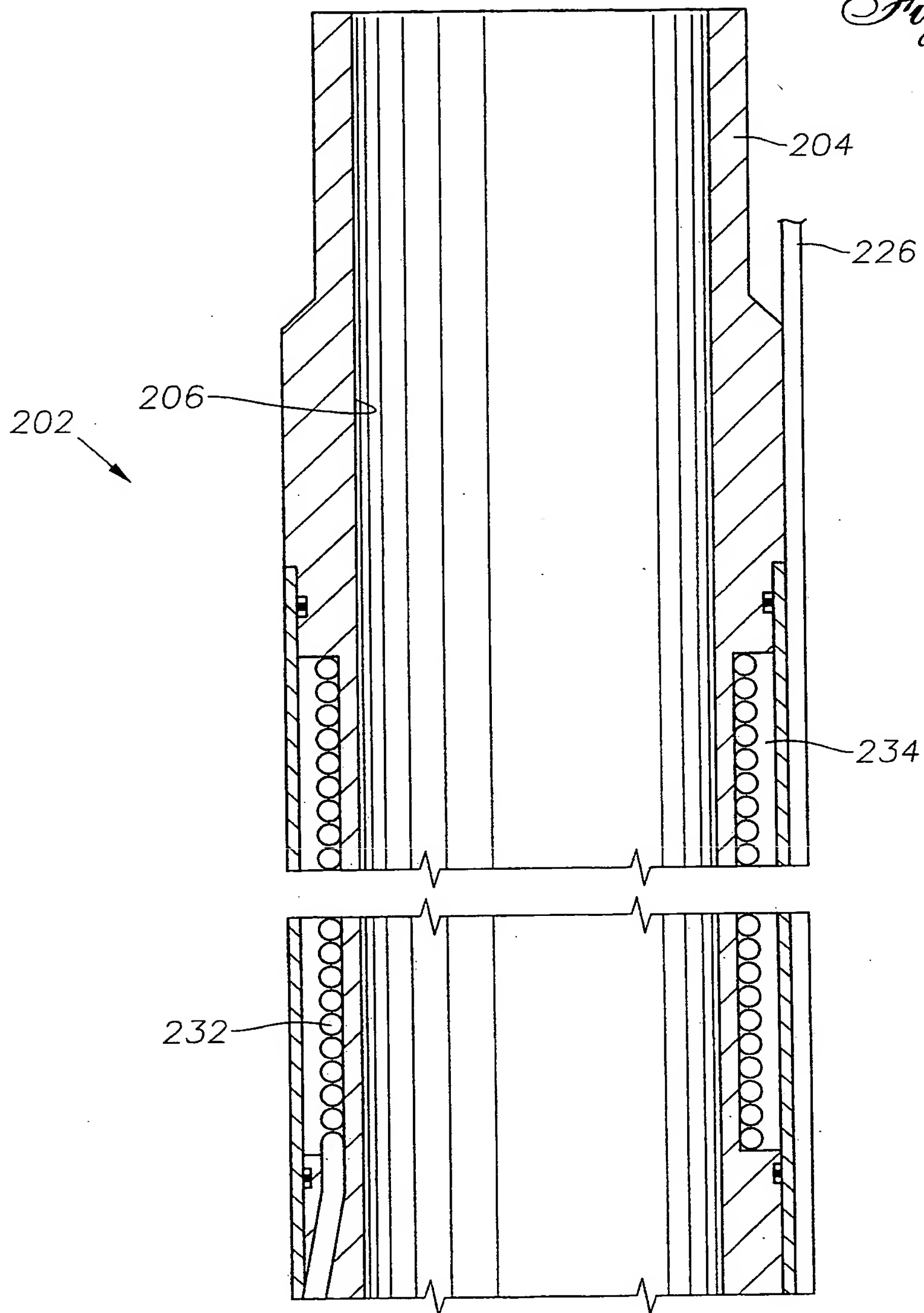


Fig. 17b



27/42

Fig. 17a



26/42

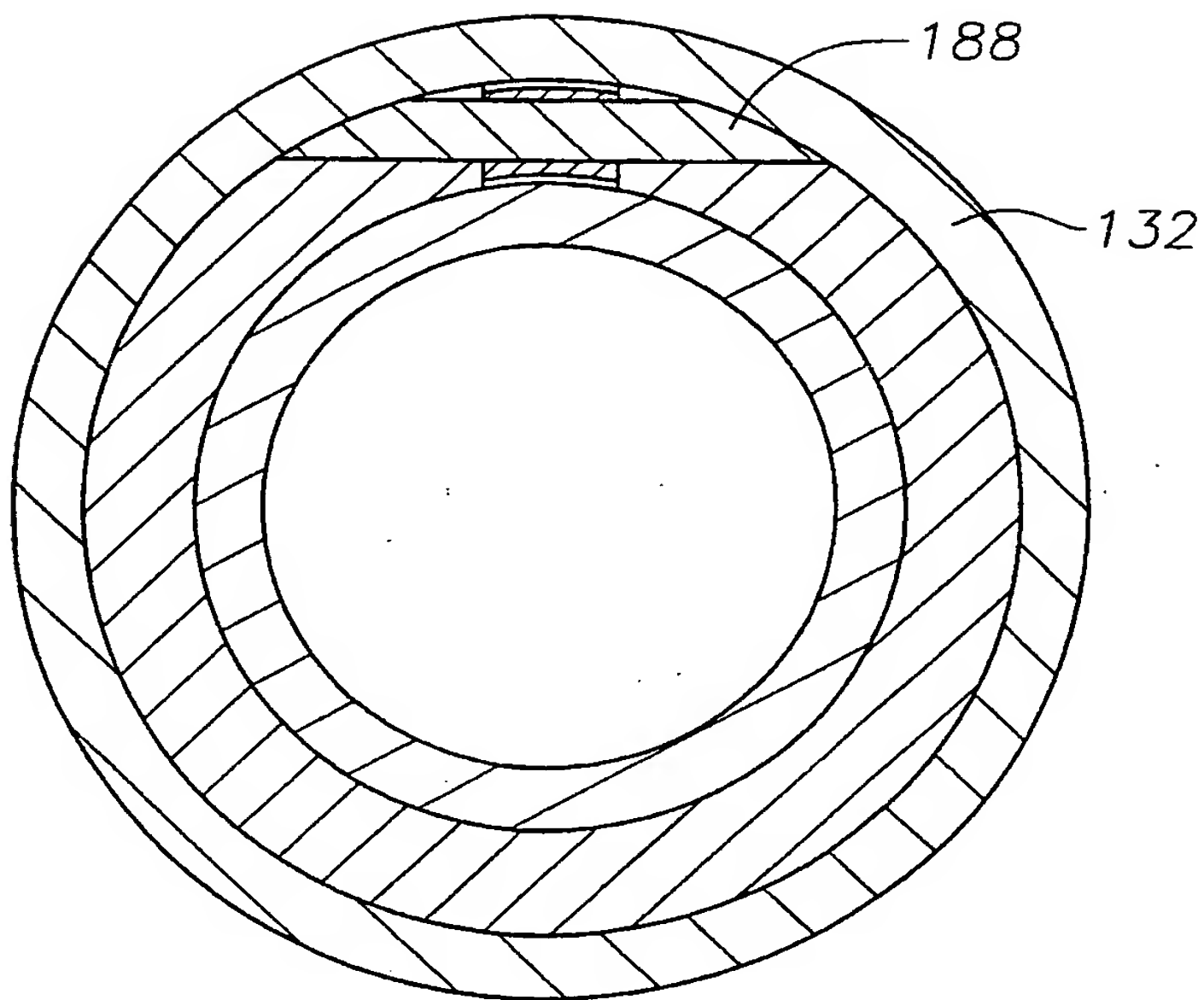


Fig. 14

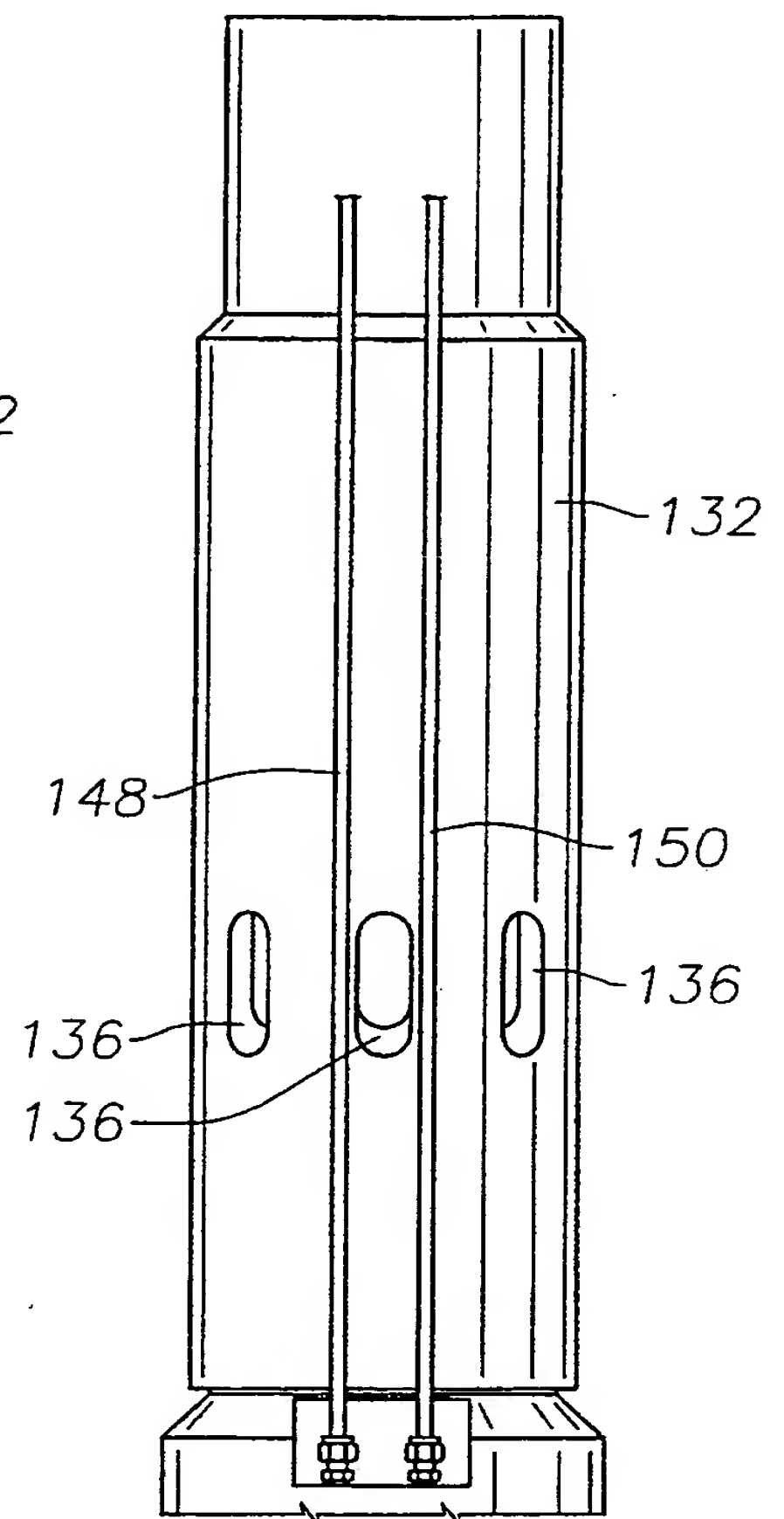


Fig. 16

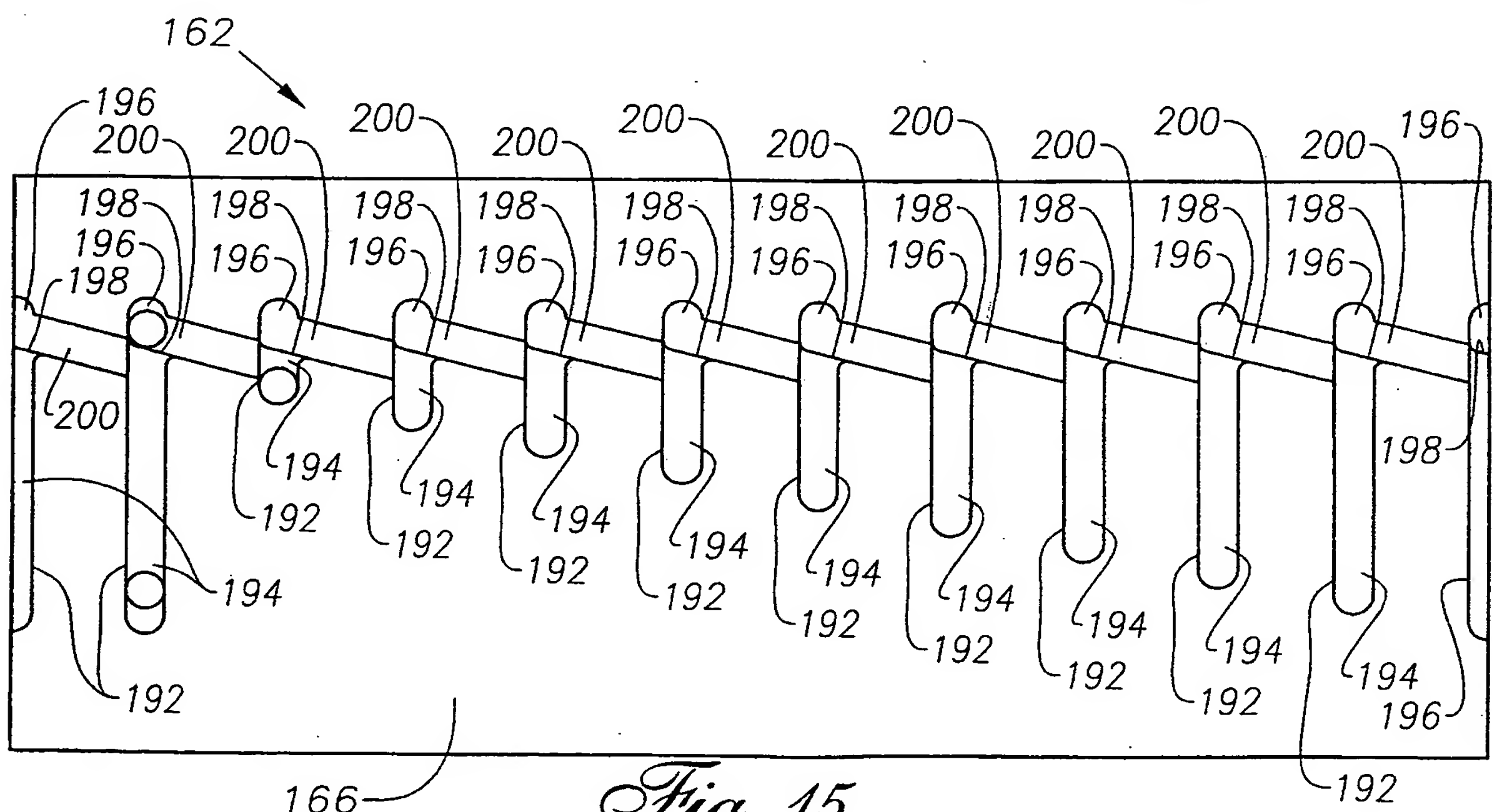


Fig. 15

25/42

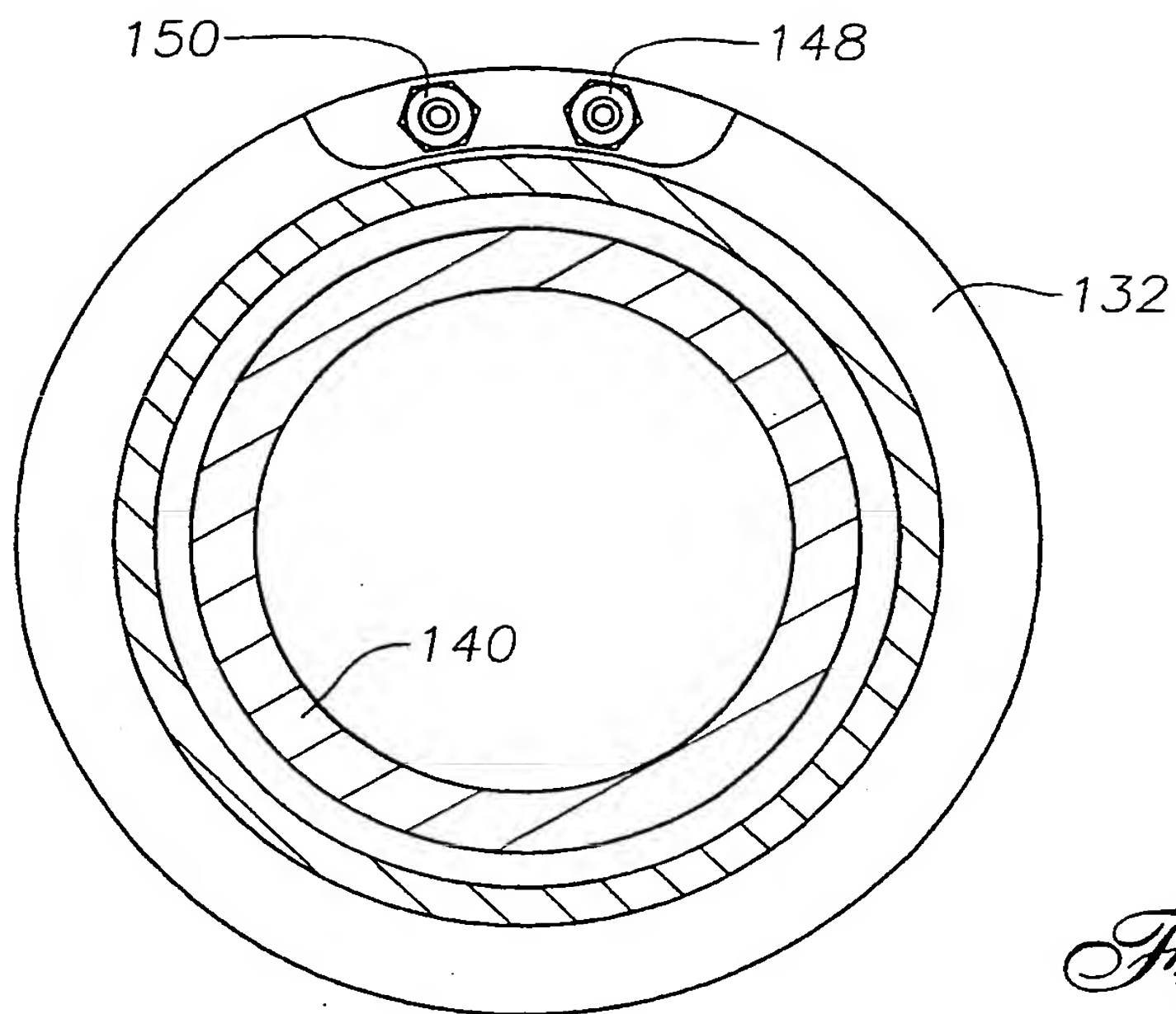


Fig. 12

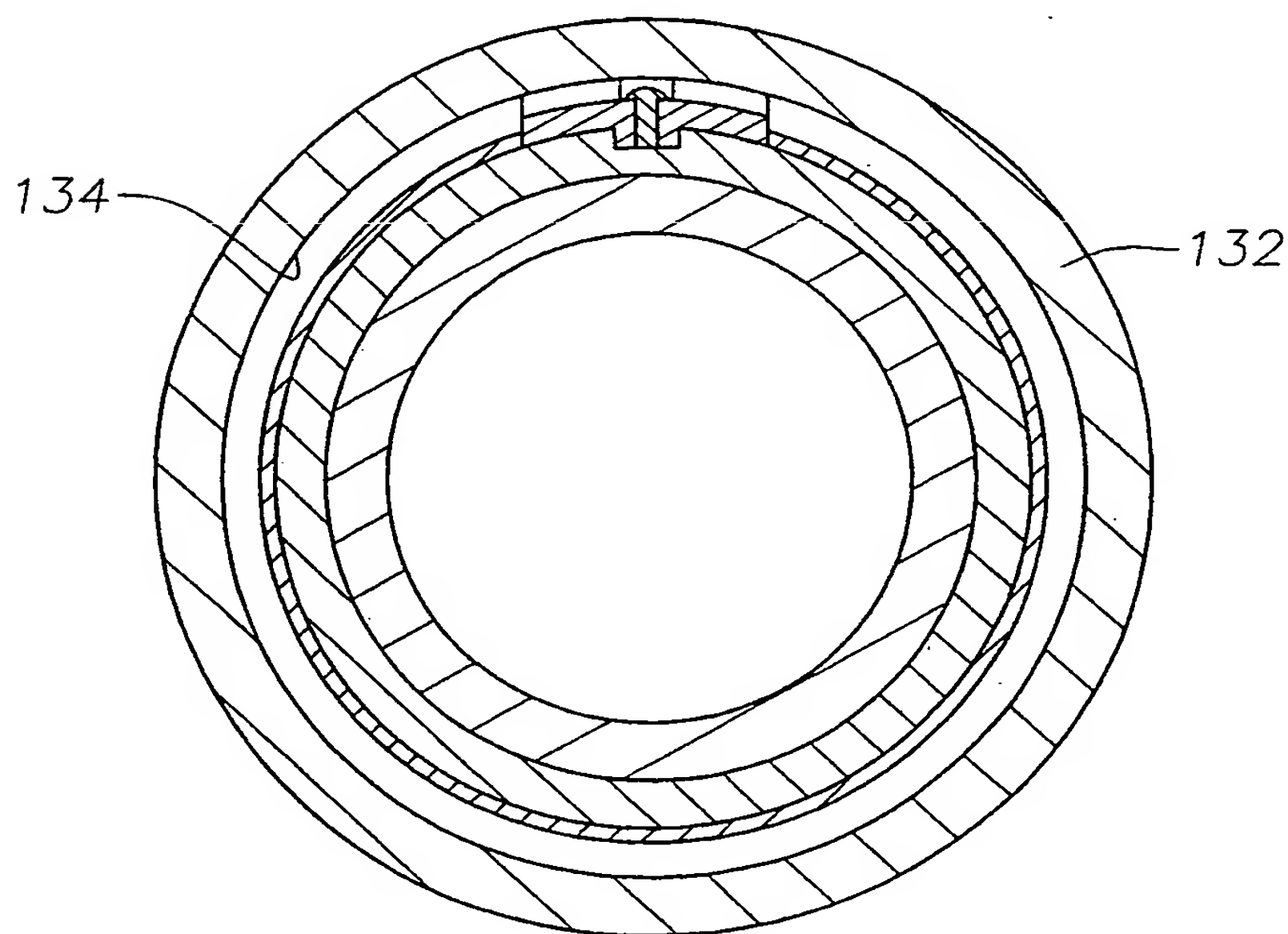


Fig. 13

24/42

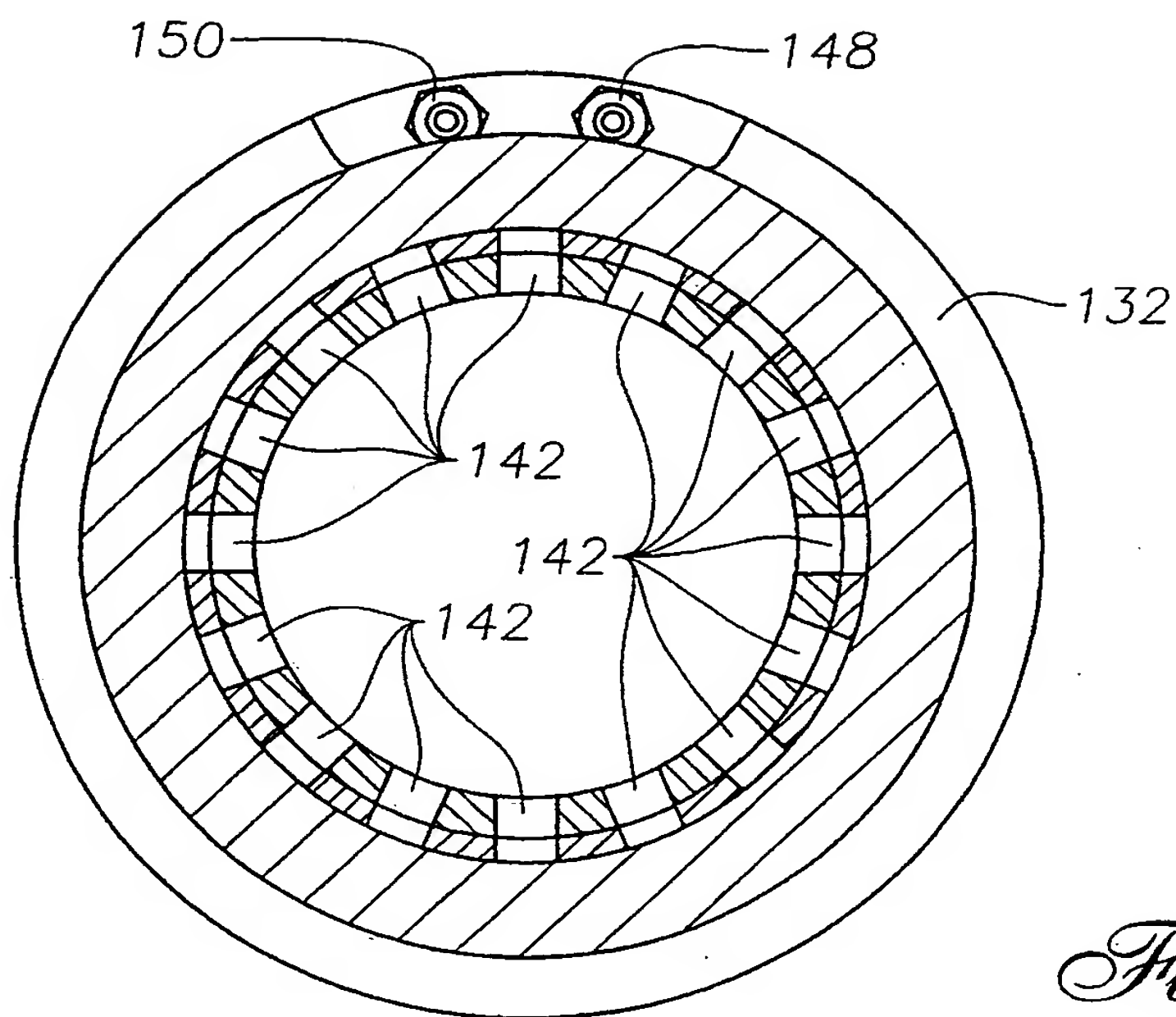


Fig. 10

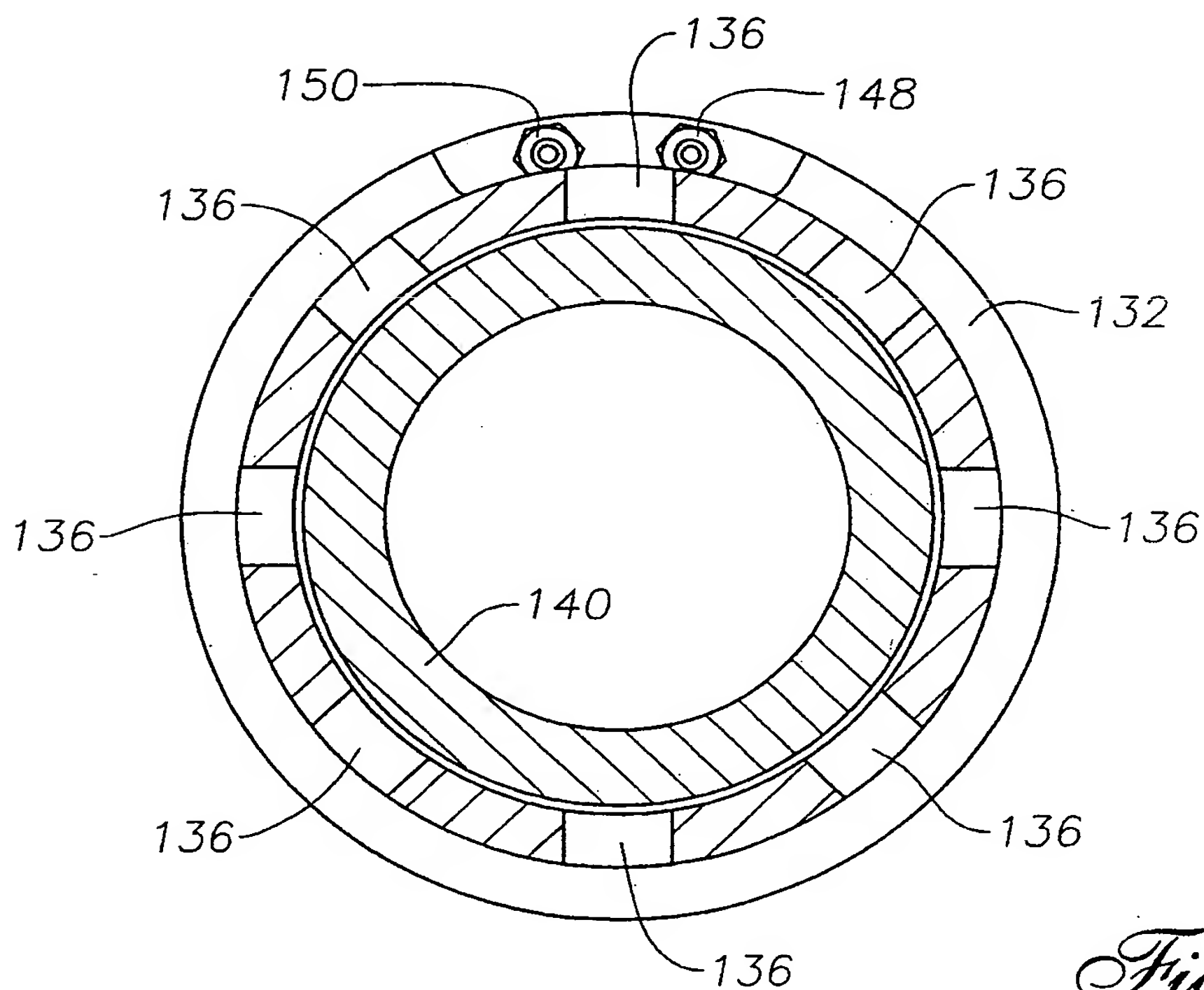


Fig. 11

23/42

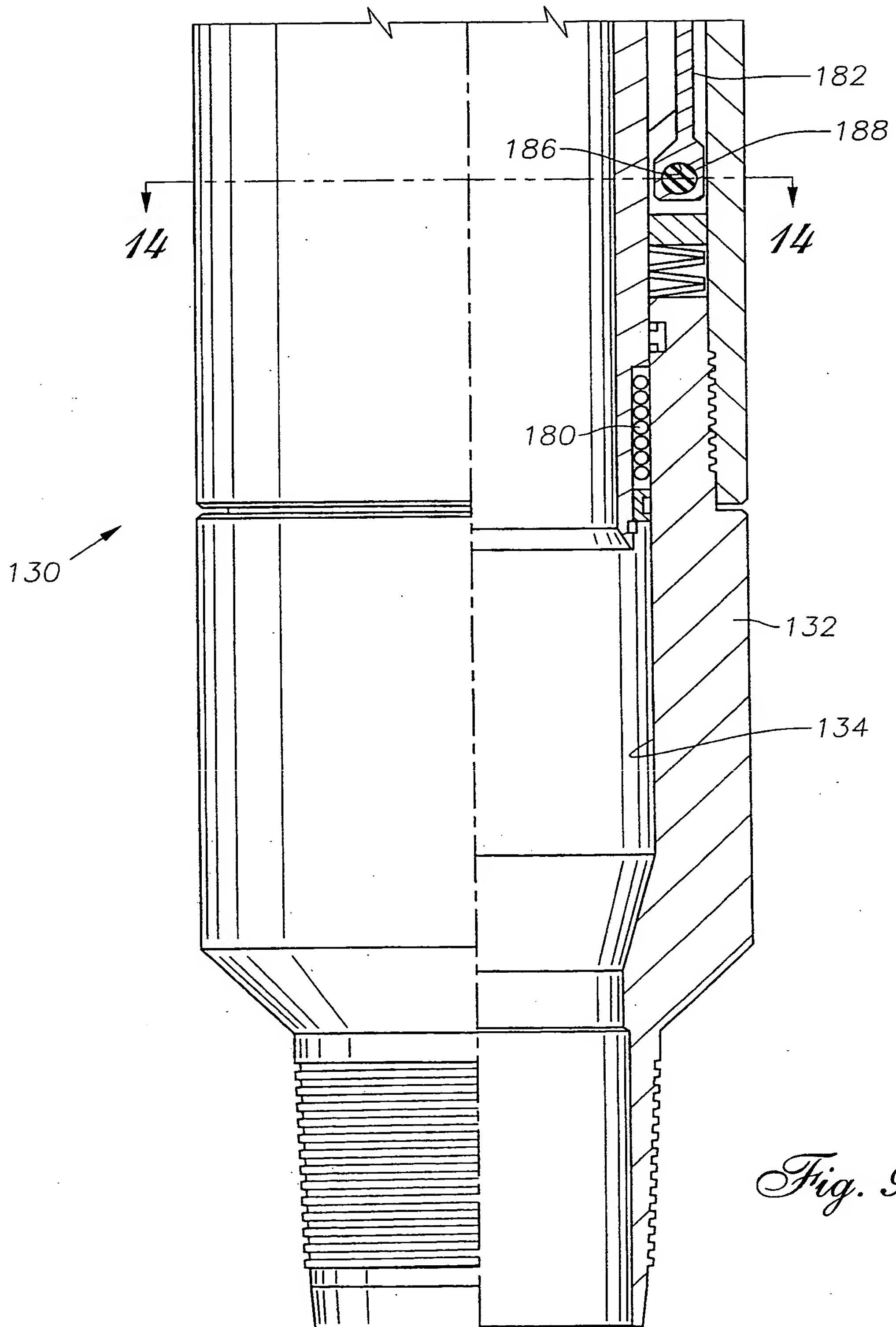
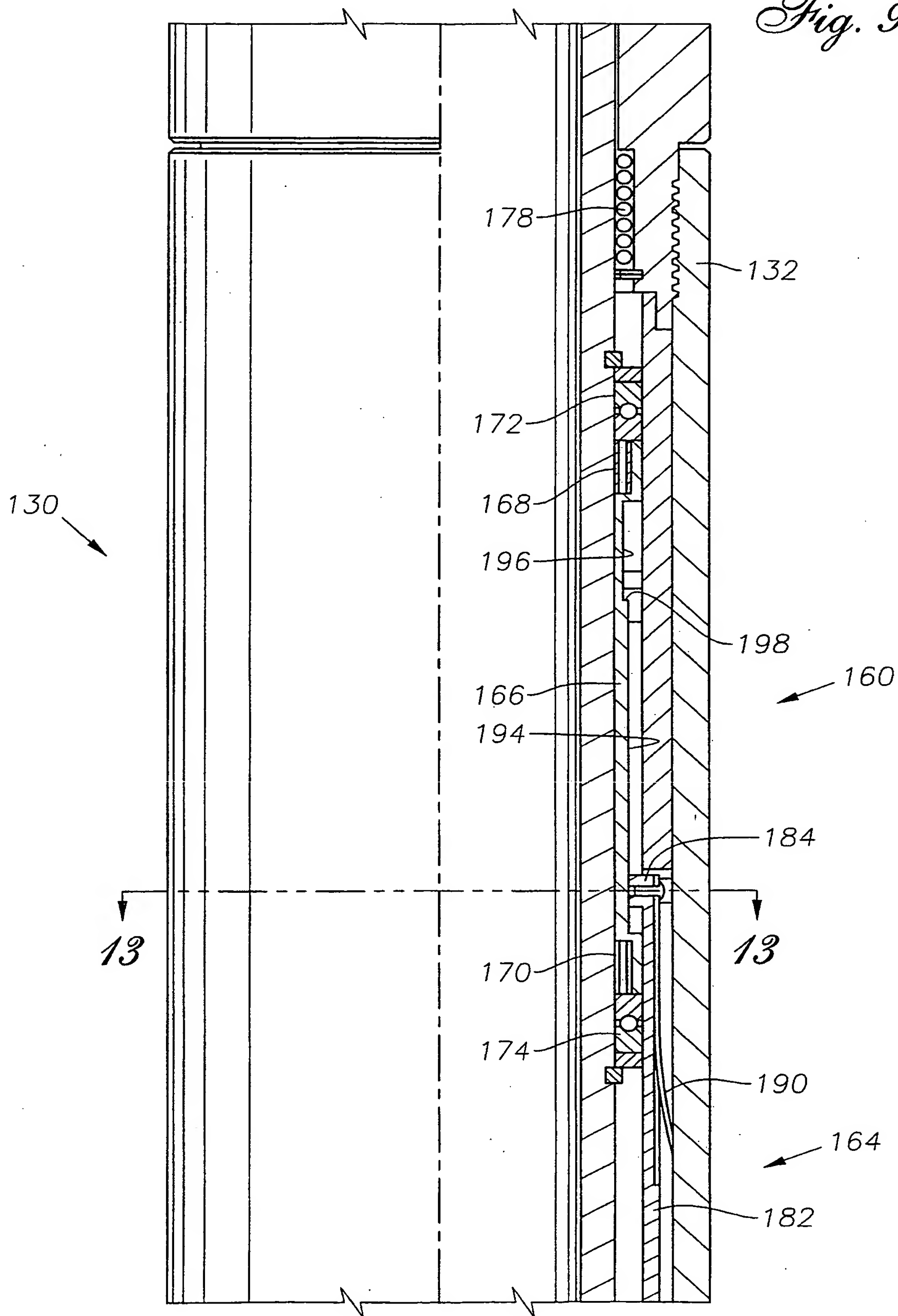


Fig. 9d

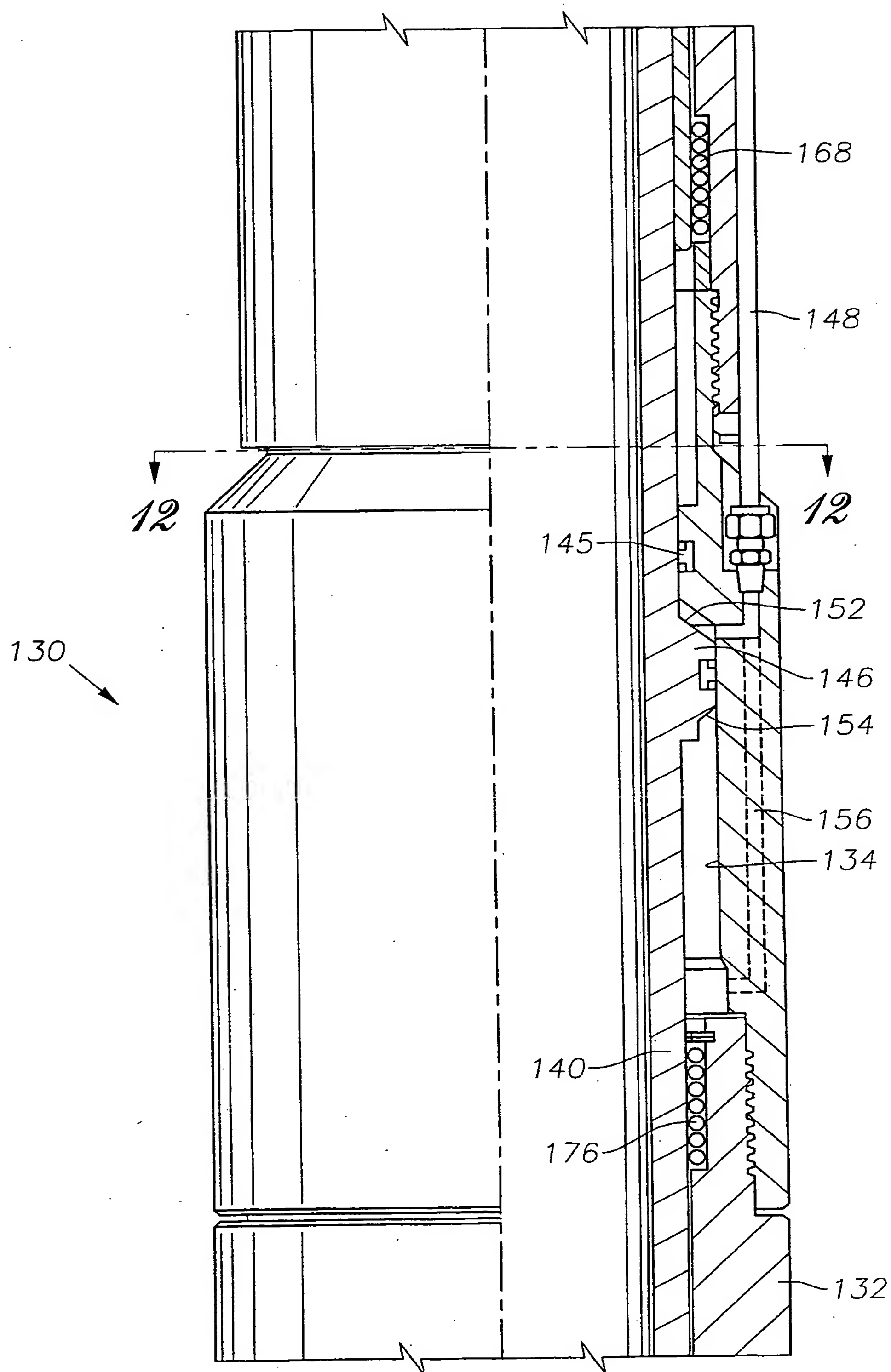
22/42

Fig. 9c

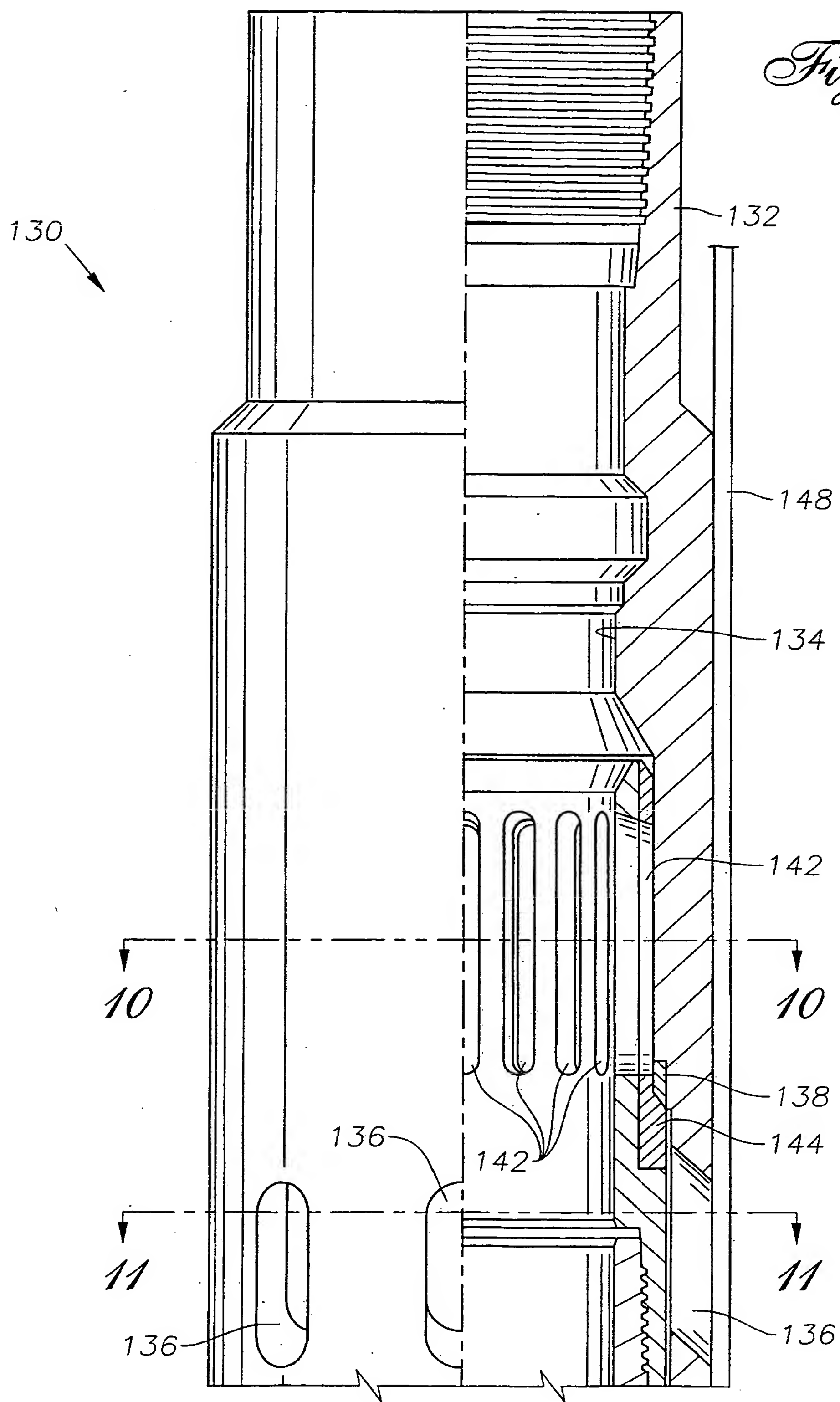


21/42

Fig. 9b



20/42

Fig. 9a

19/42

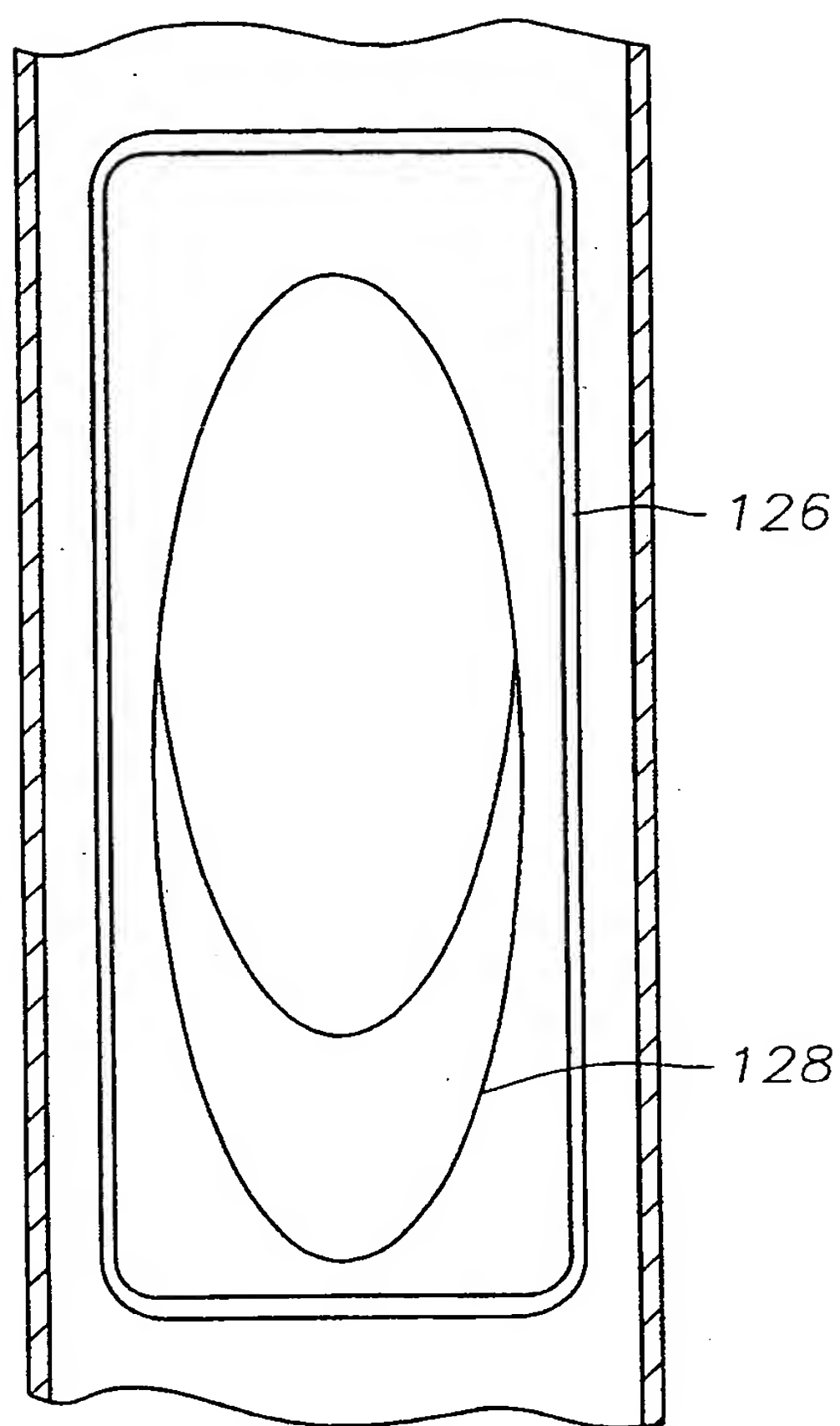


Fig. 7

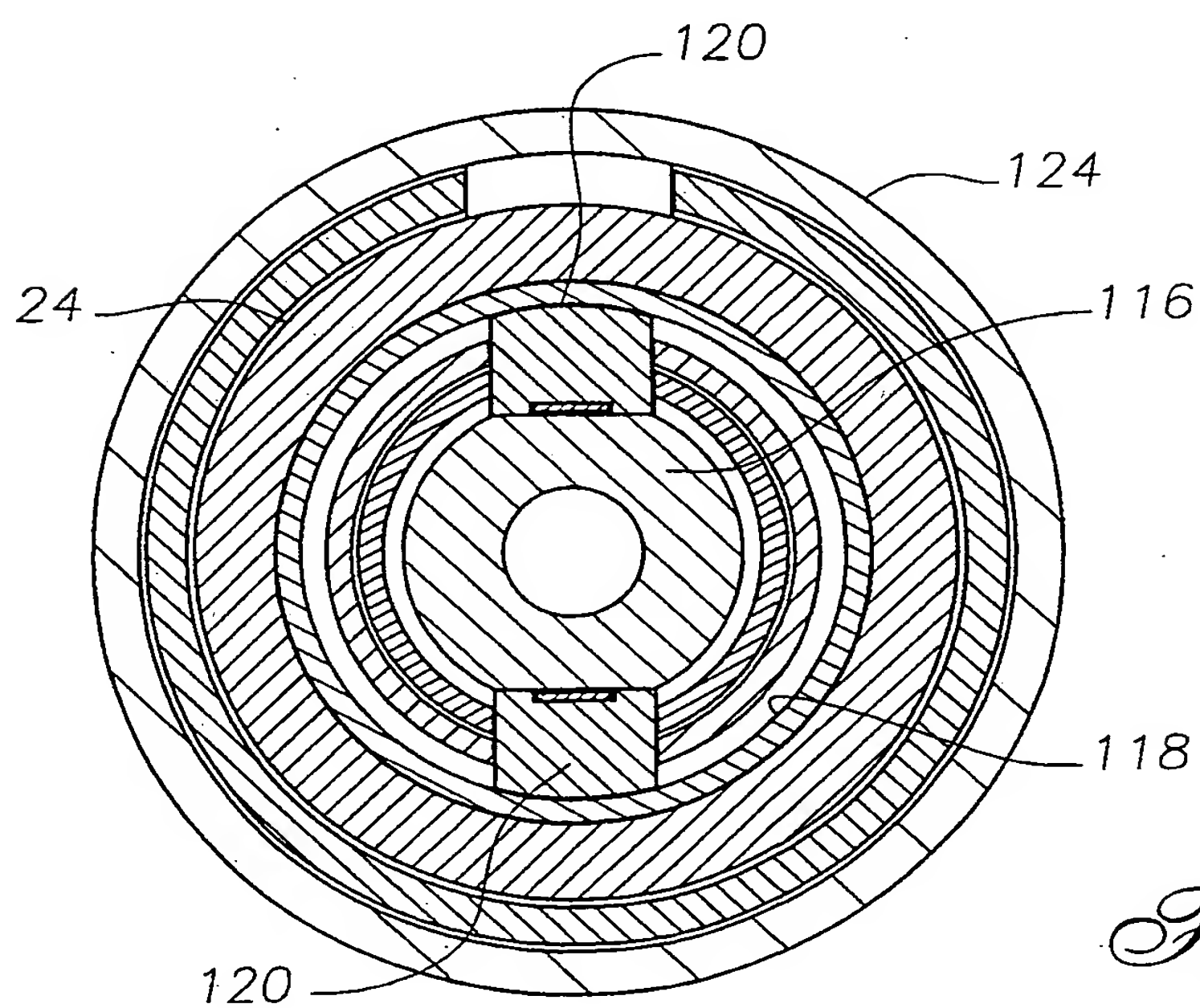


Fig. 8

18/42

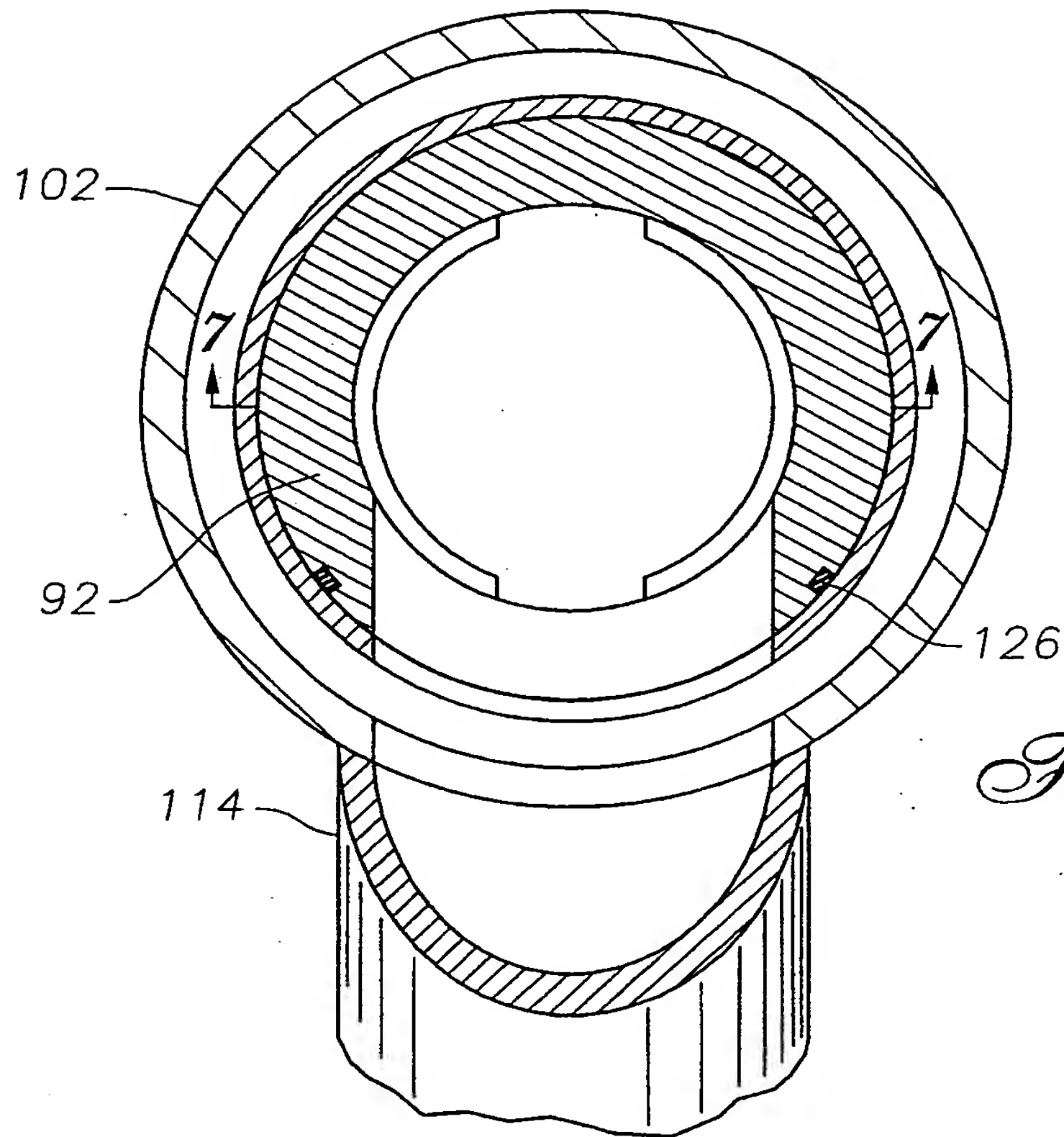


Fig. 5

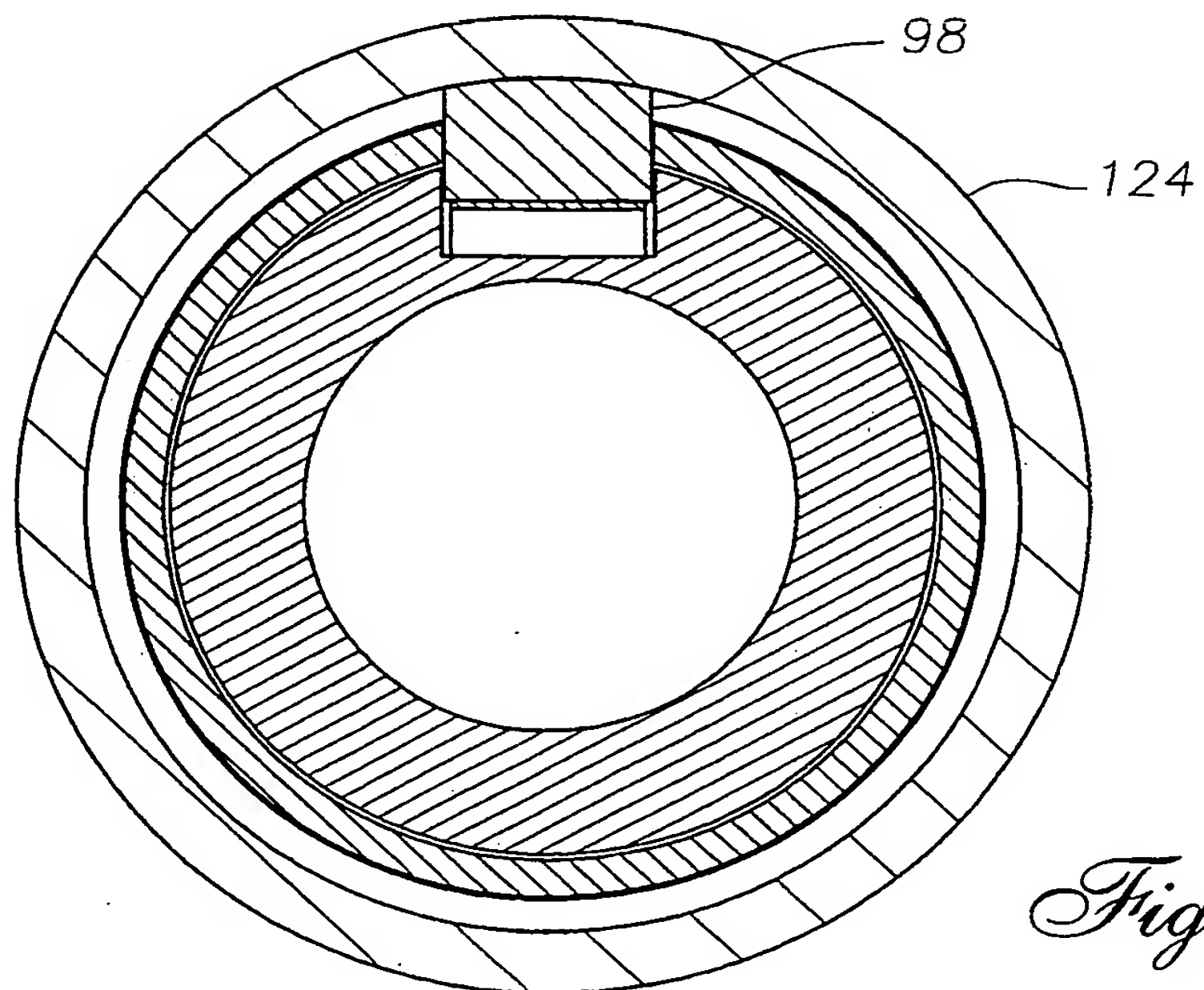


Fig. 6

17/42

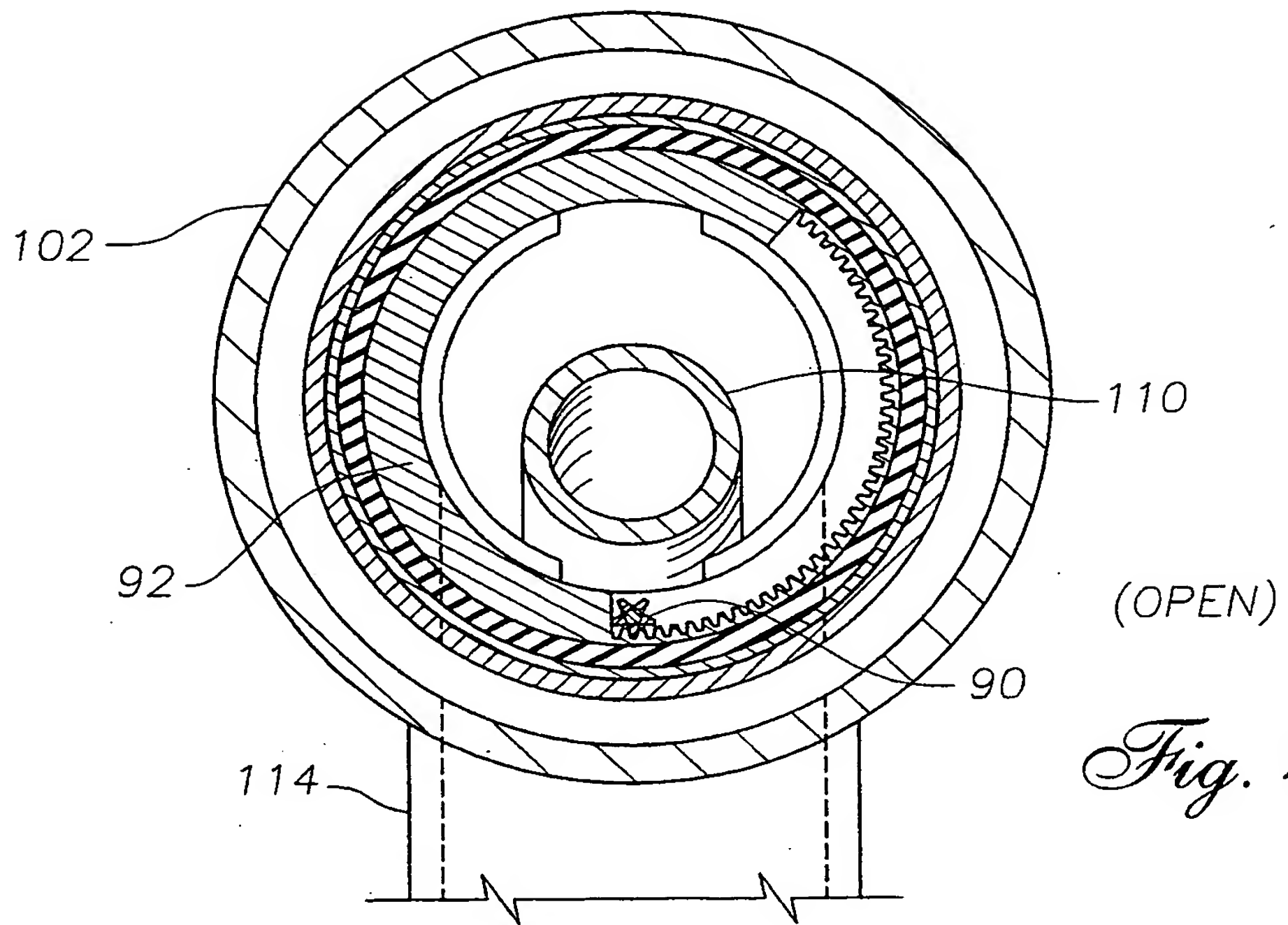
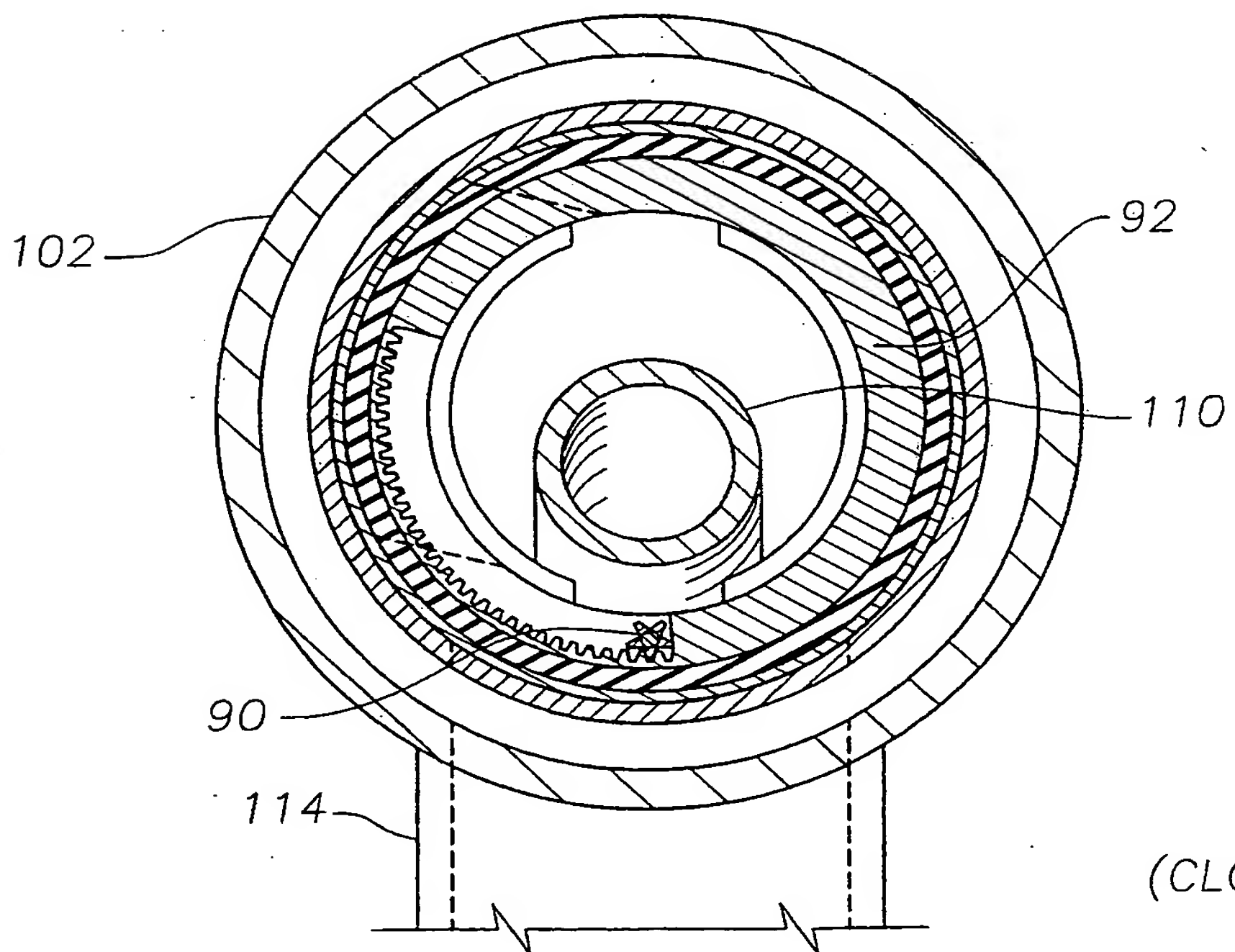


Fig. 4a



(CLOSED)

Fig. 4b

16/42

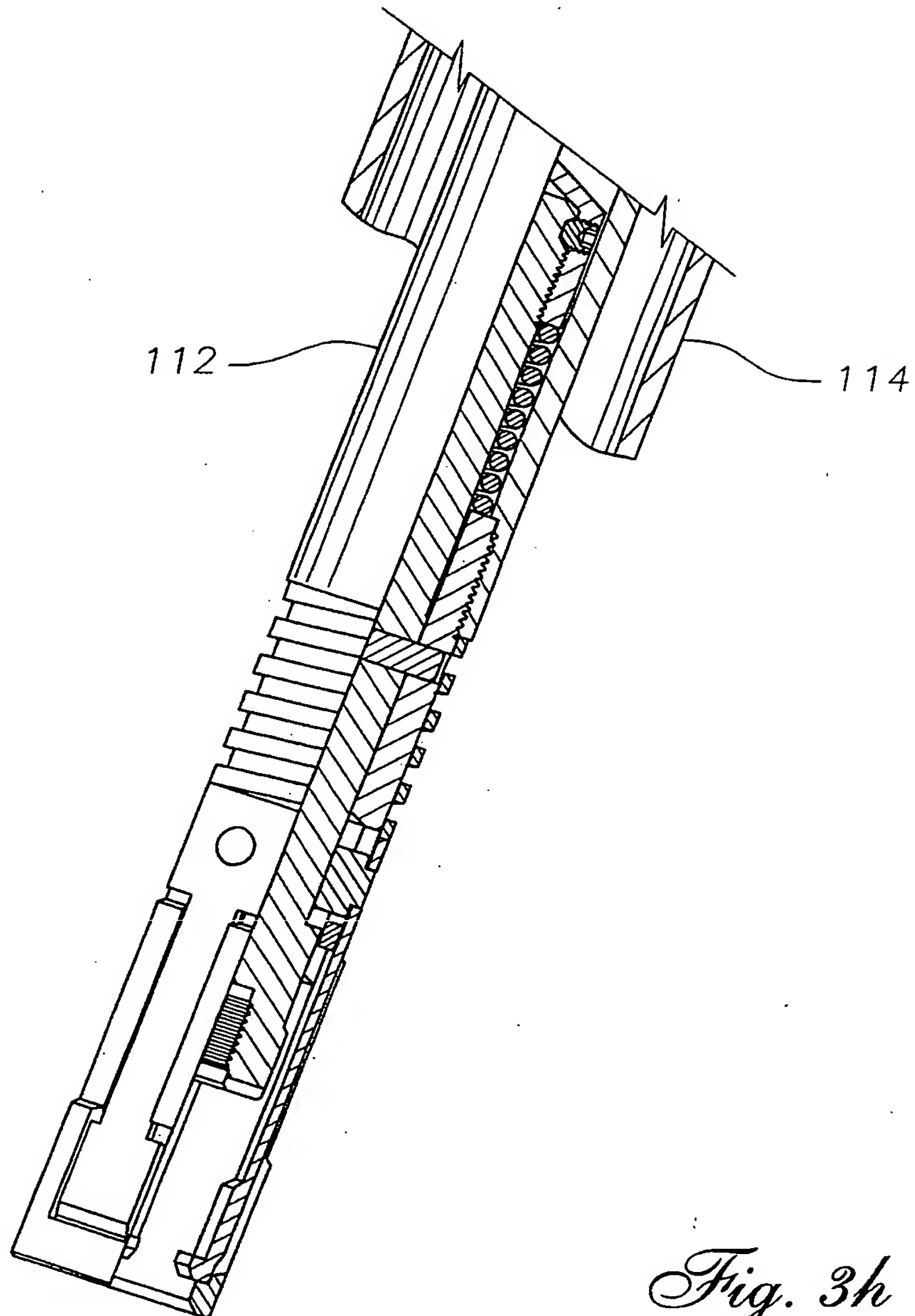


Fig. 3h

15/42

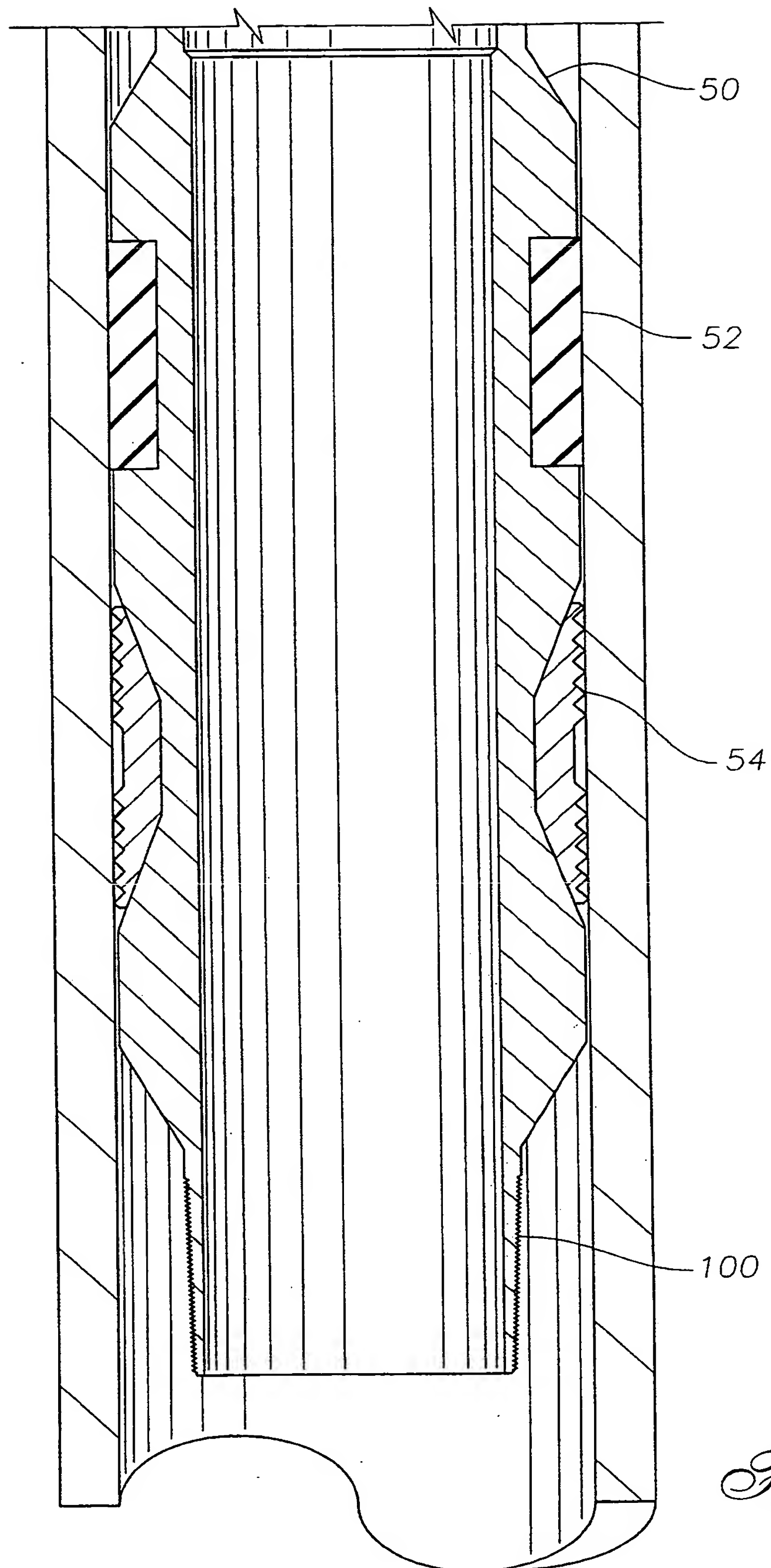


Fig. 3g

14/42

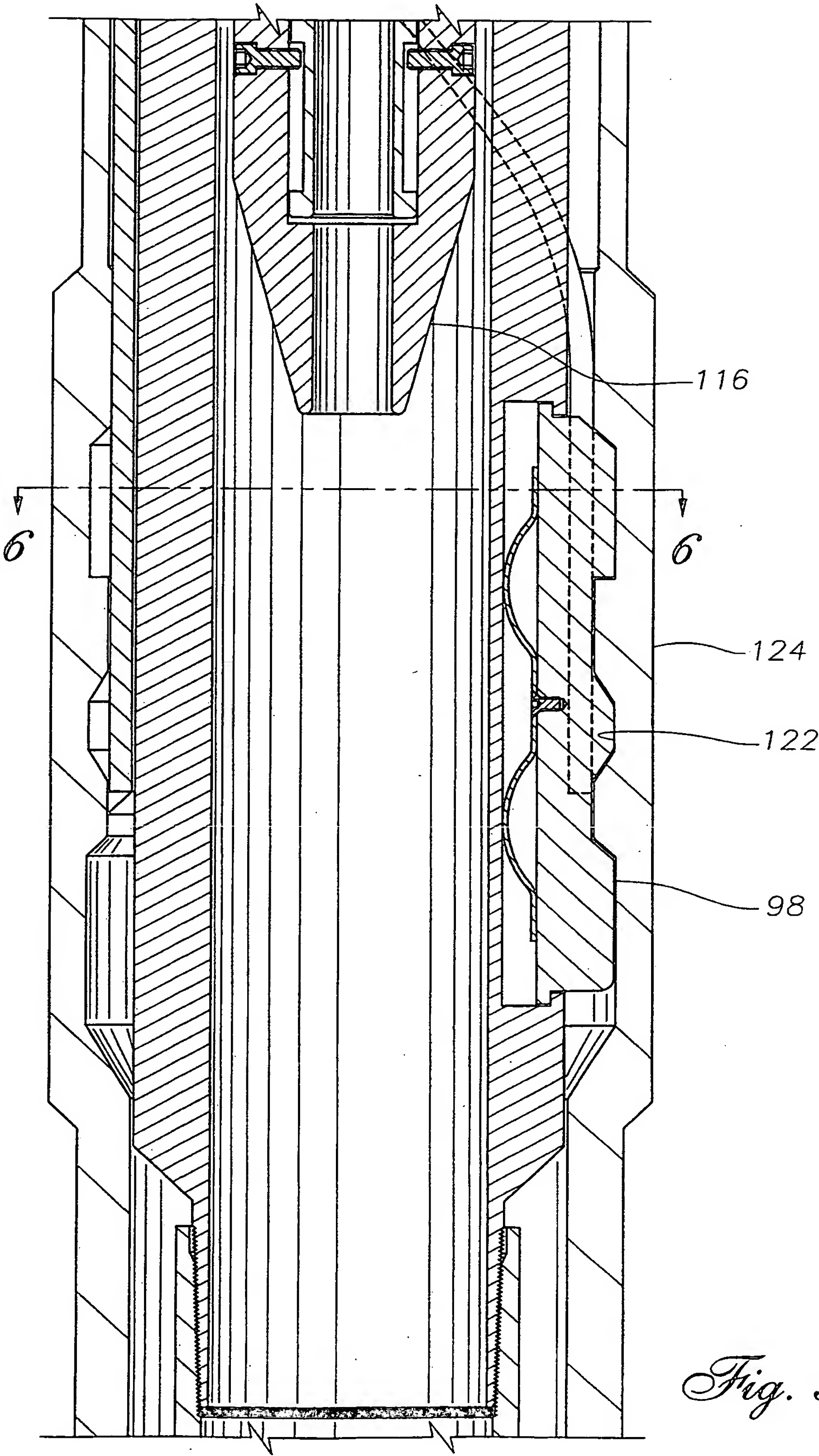
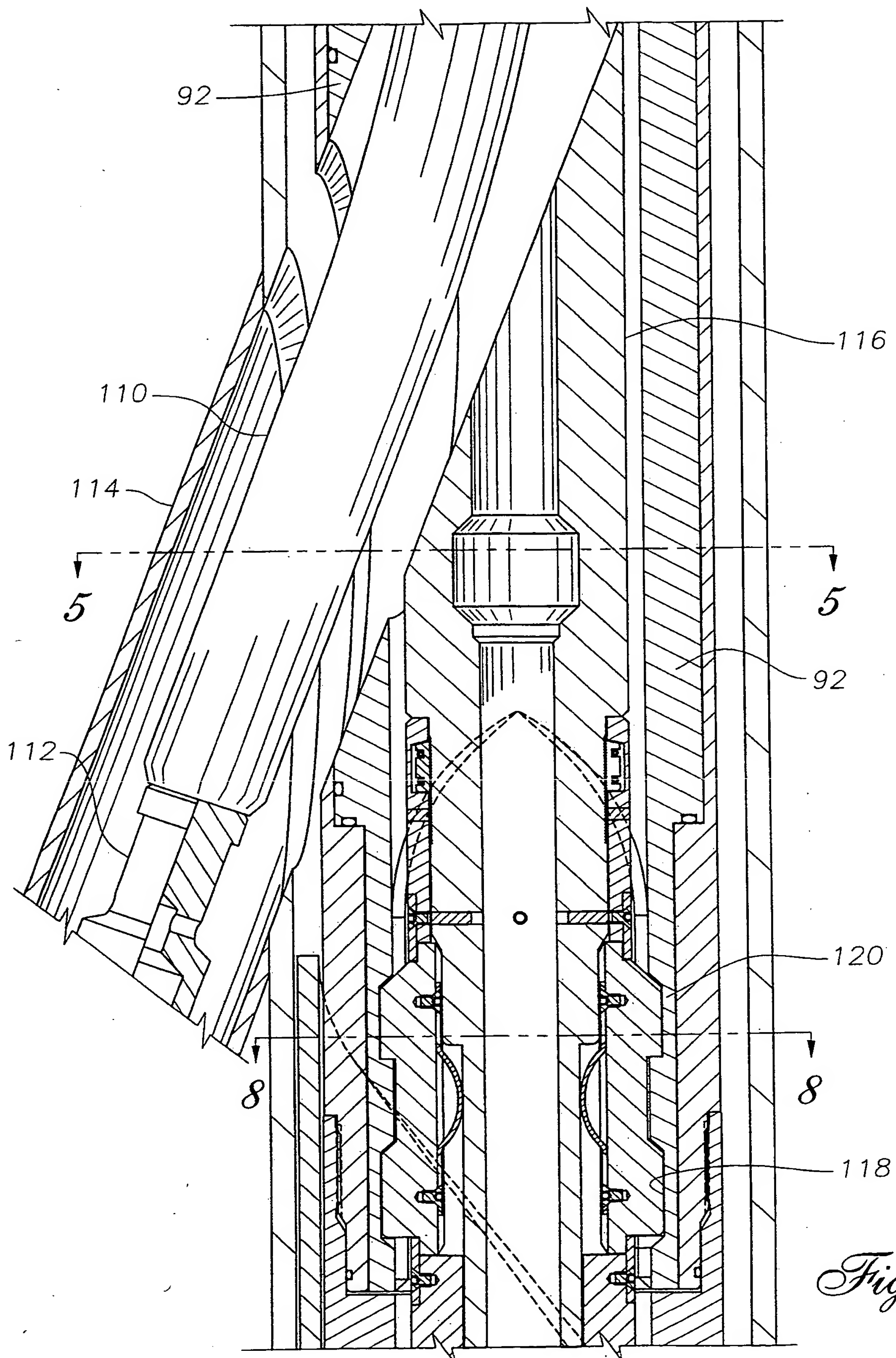


Fig. 3f

13/42



12/42

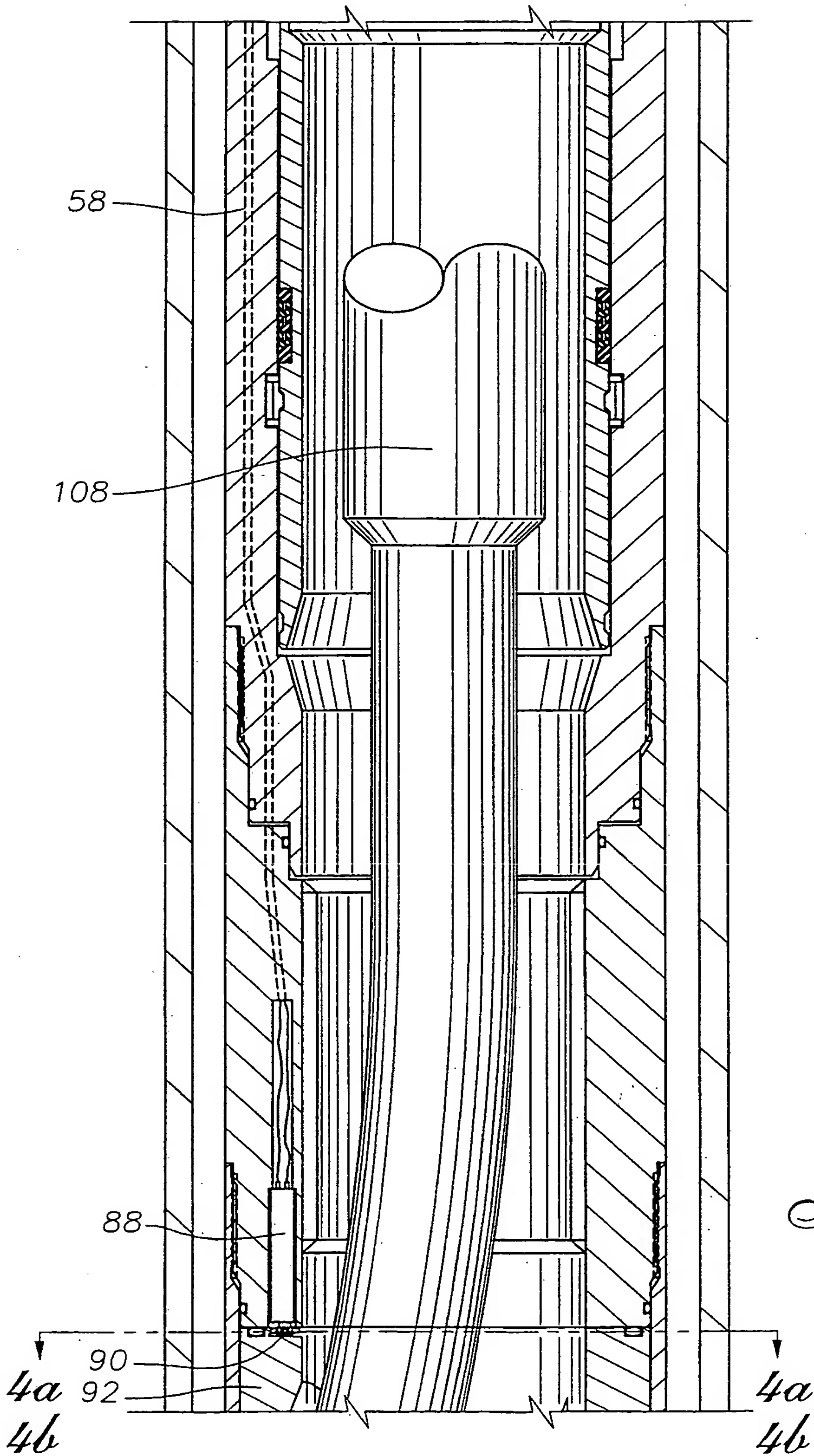


Fig. 3d

11/42

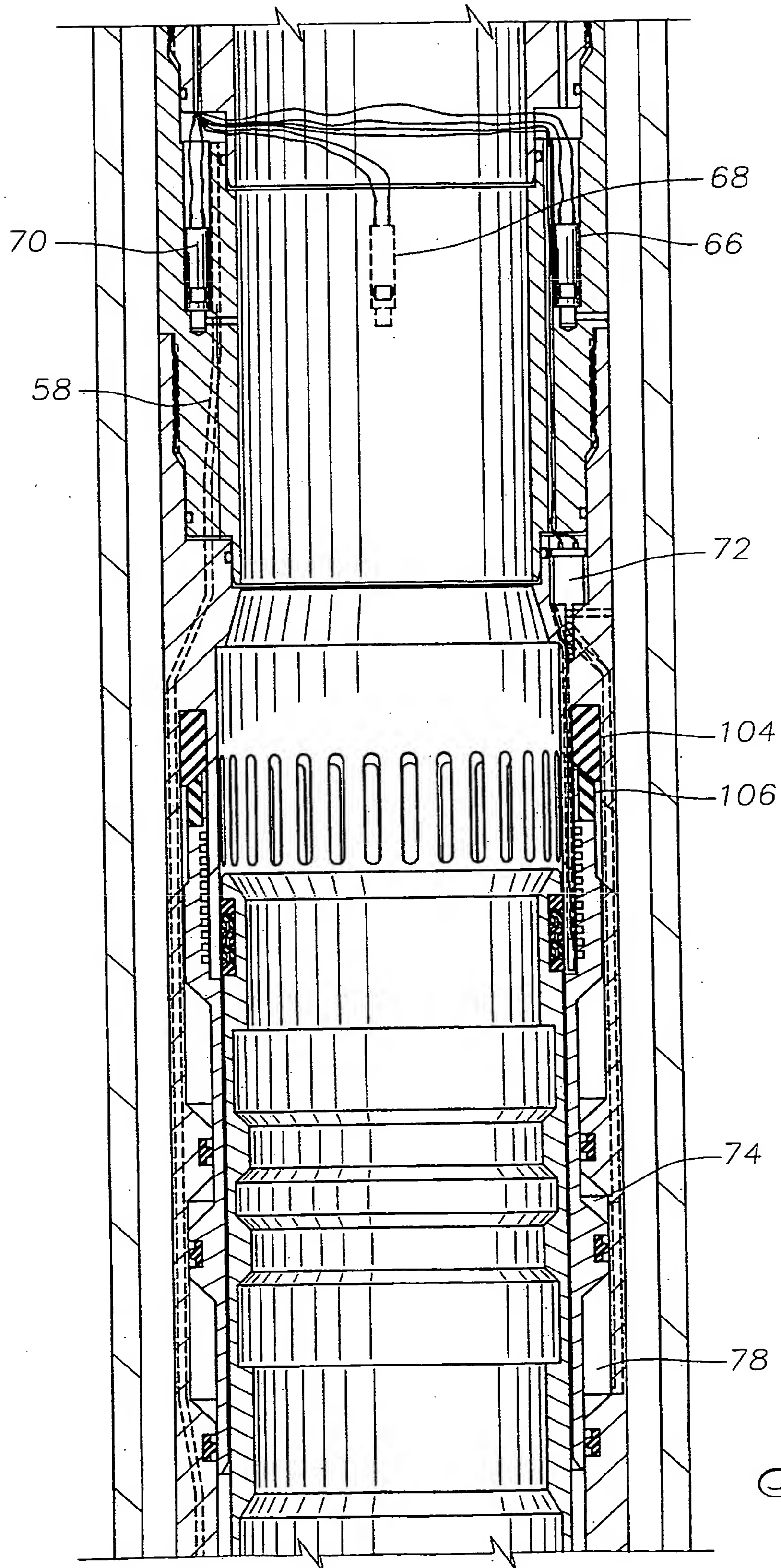


Fig. 3c

10/42

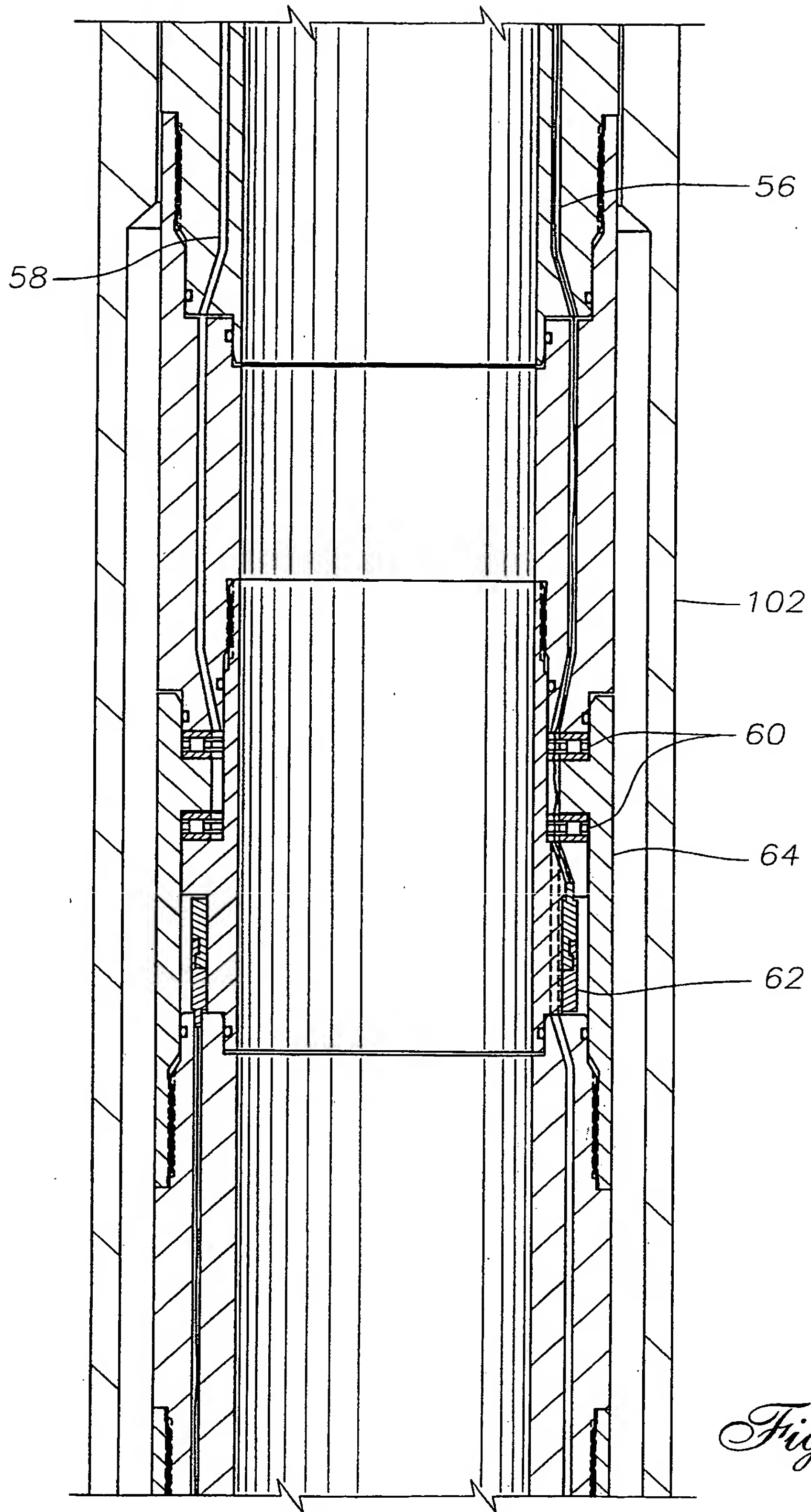


Fig. 3b

9/42

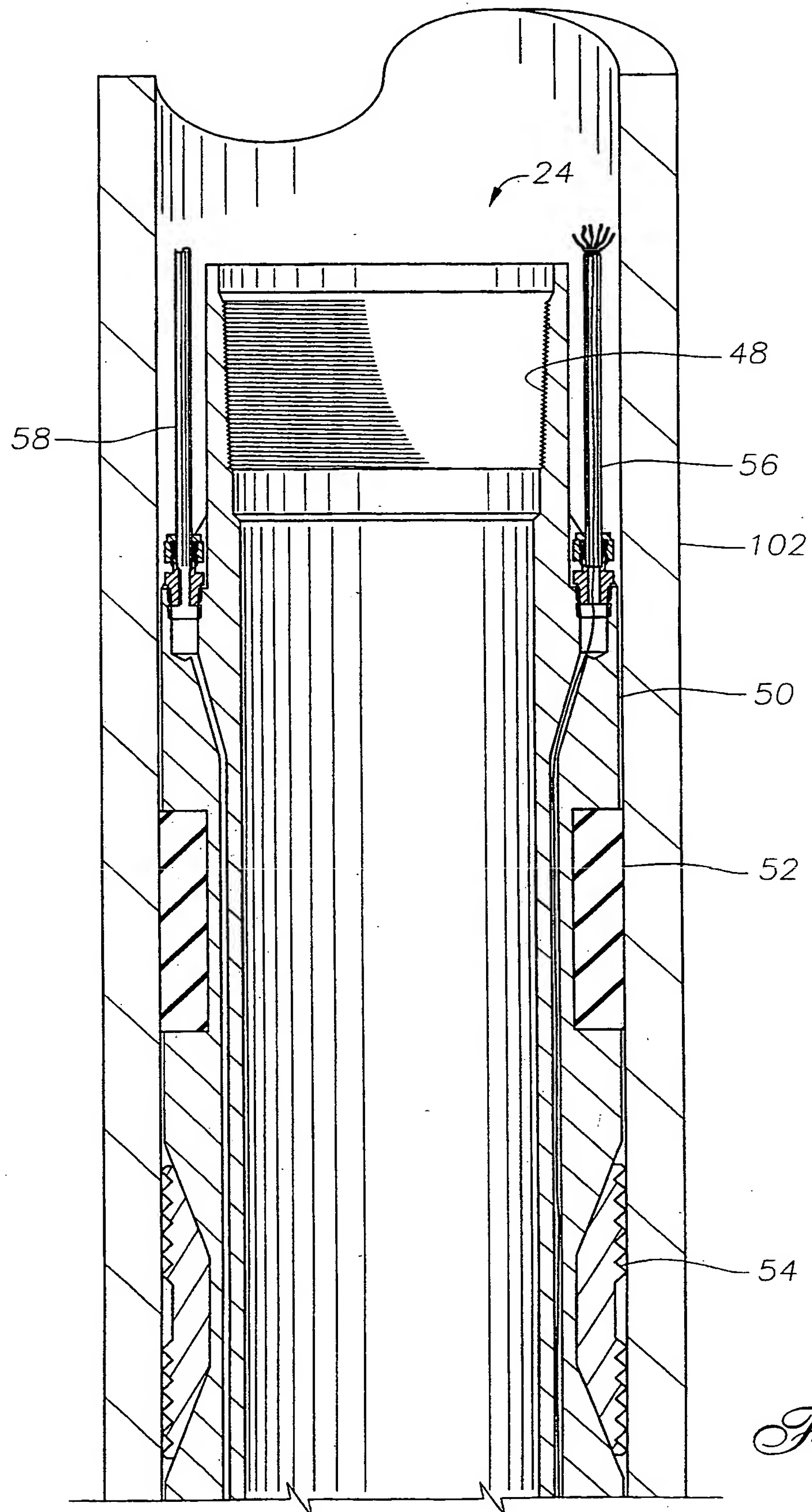


Fig. 3a

8/42

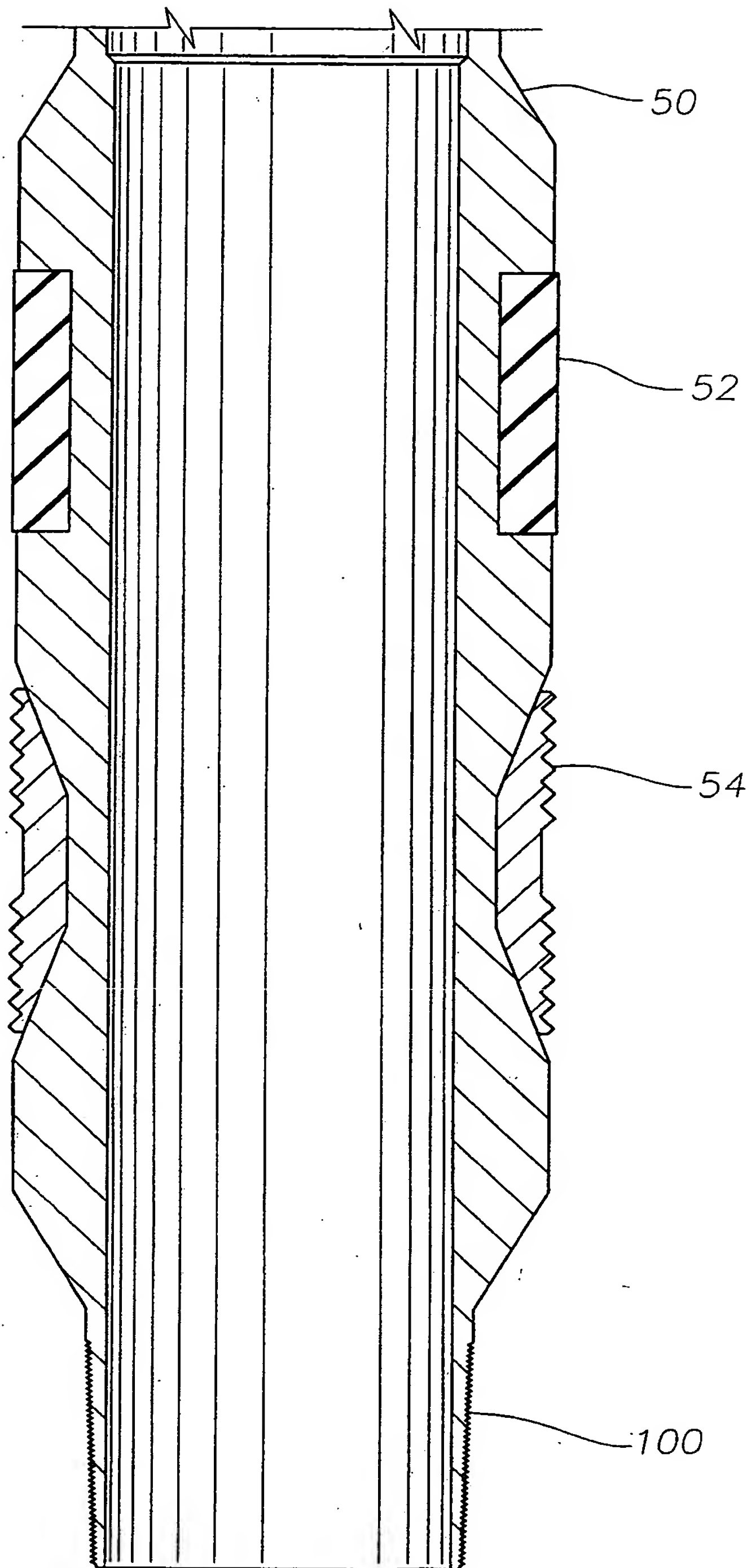


Fig. 2g

7/42

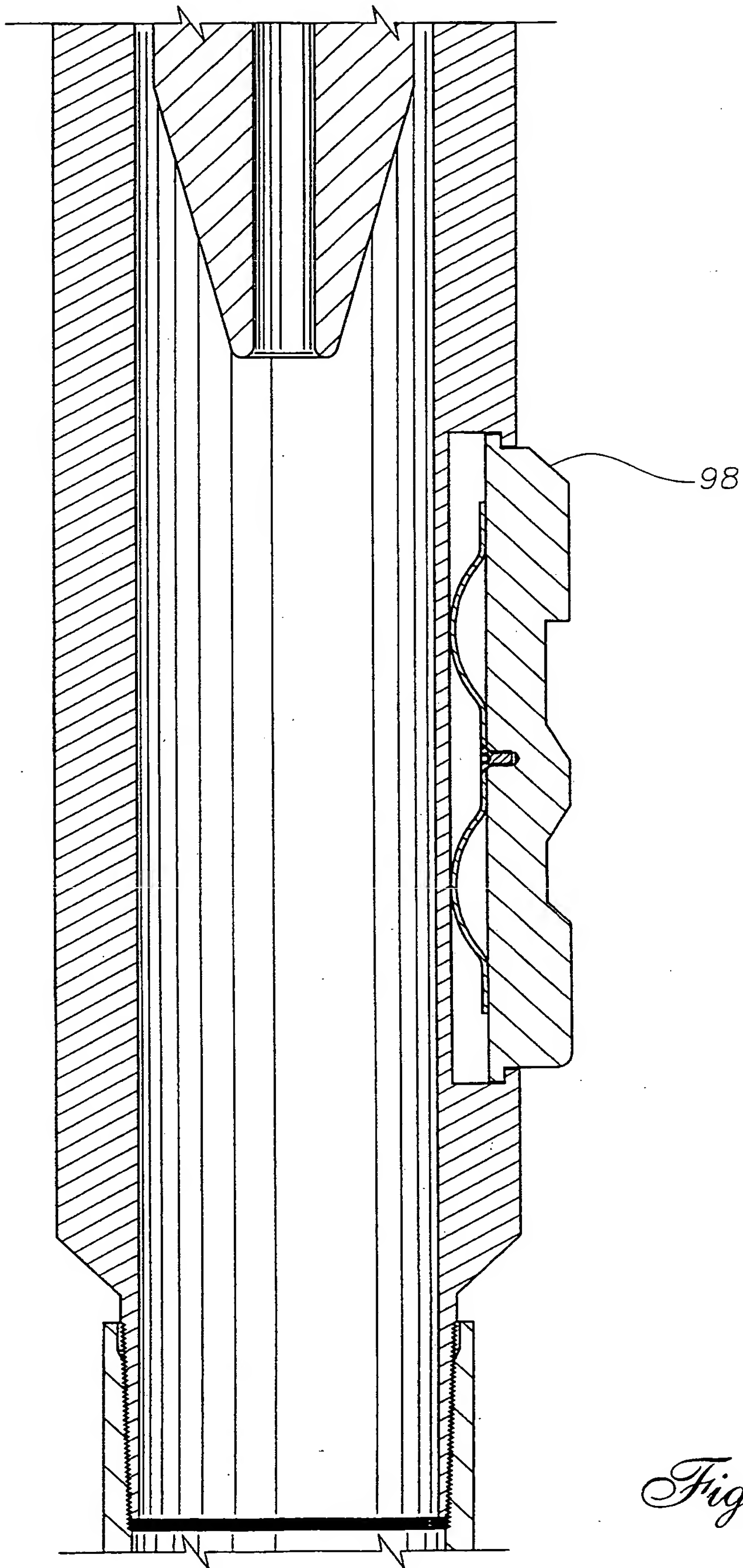


Fig. 2f

6/42

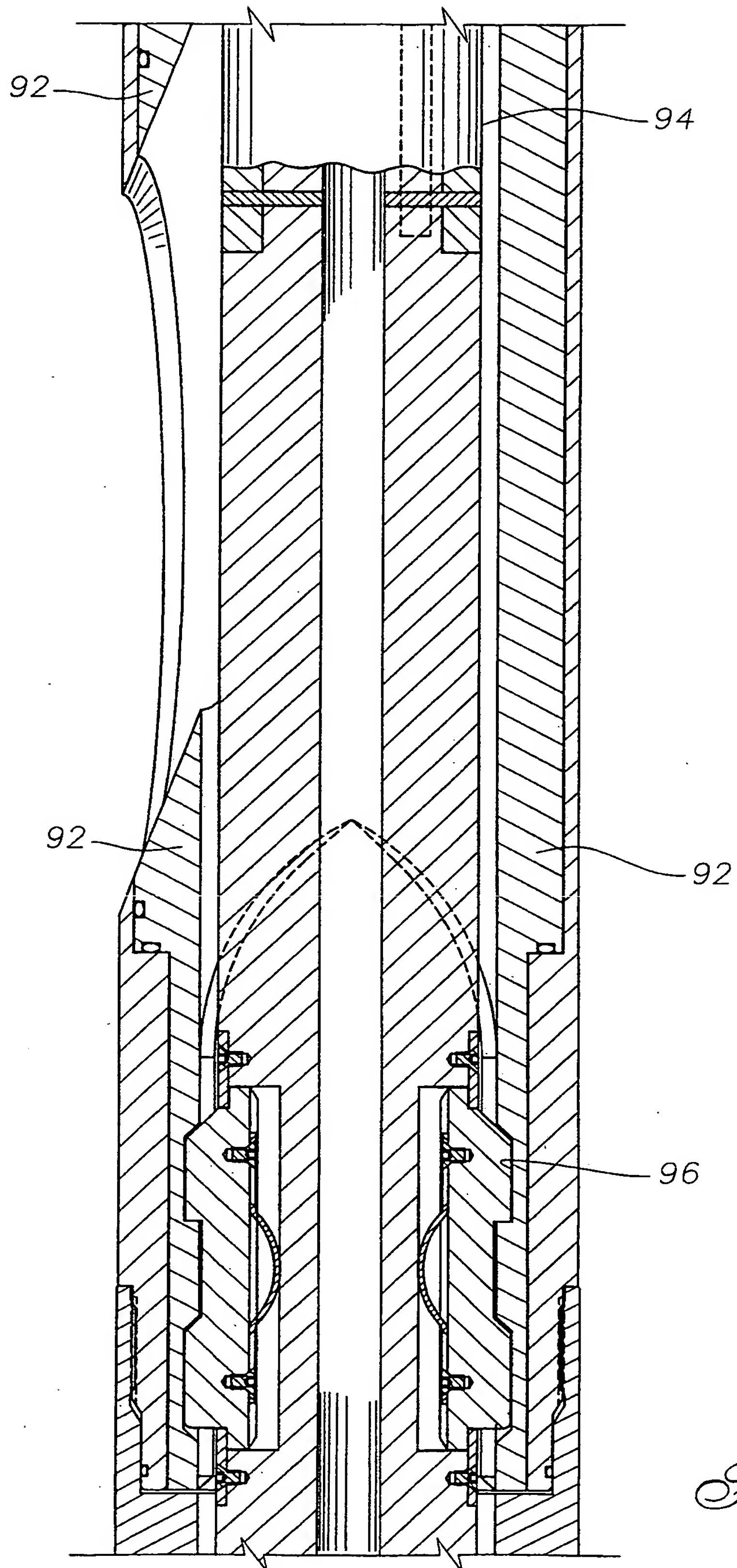


Fig. 2e

5/42

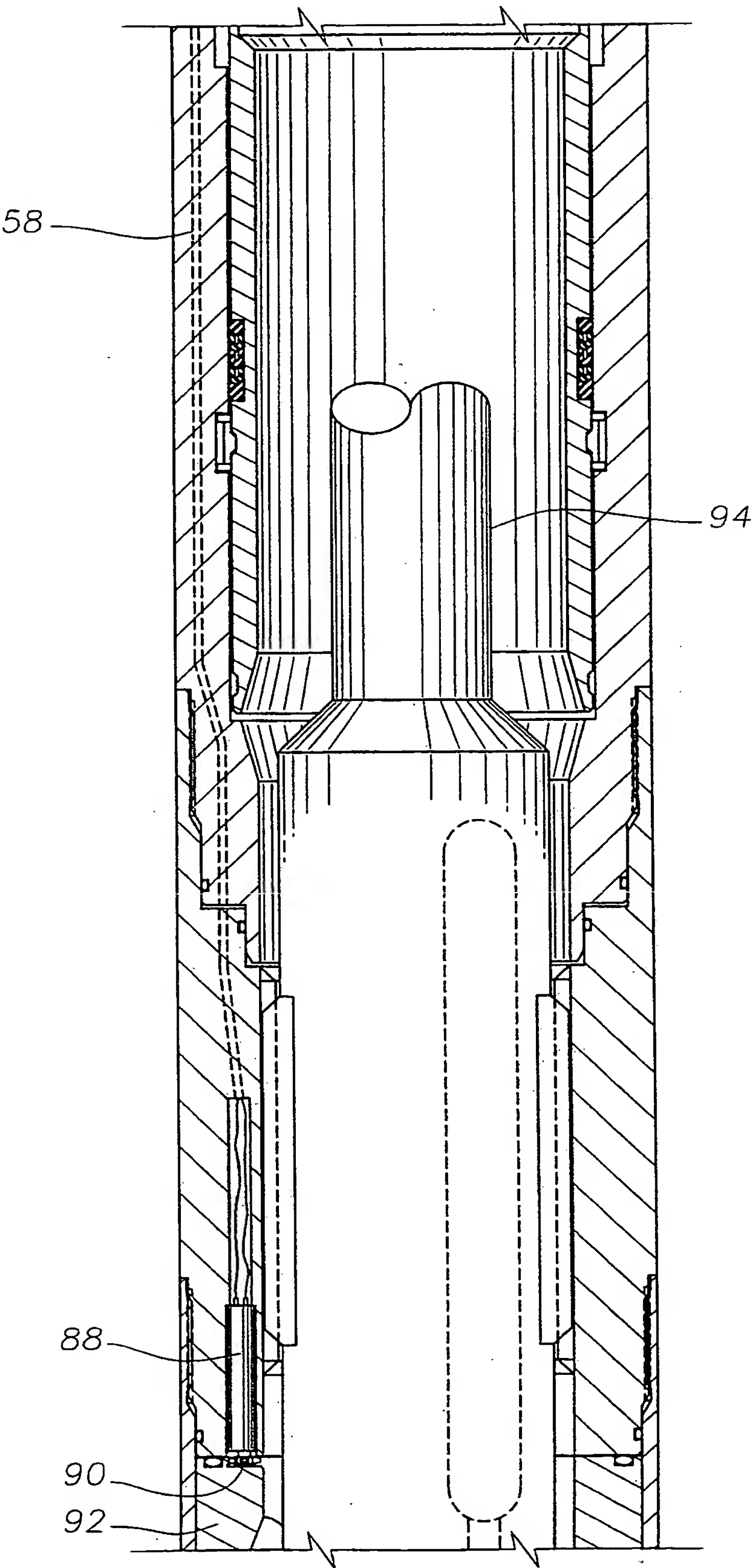


Fig. 2d

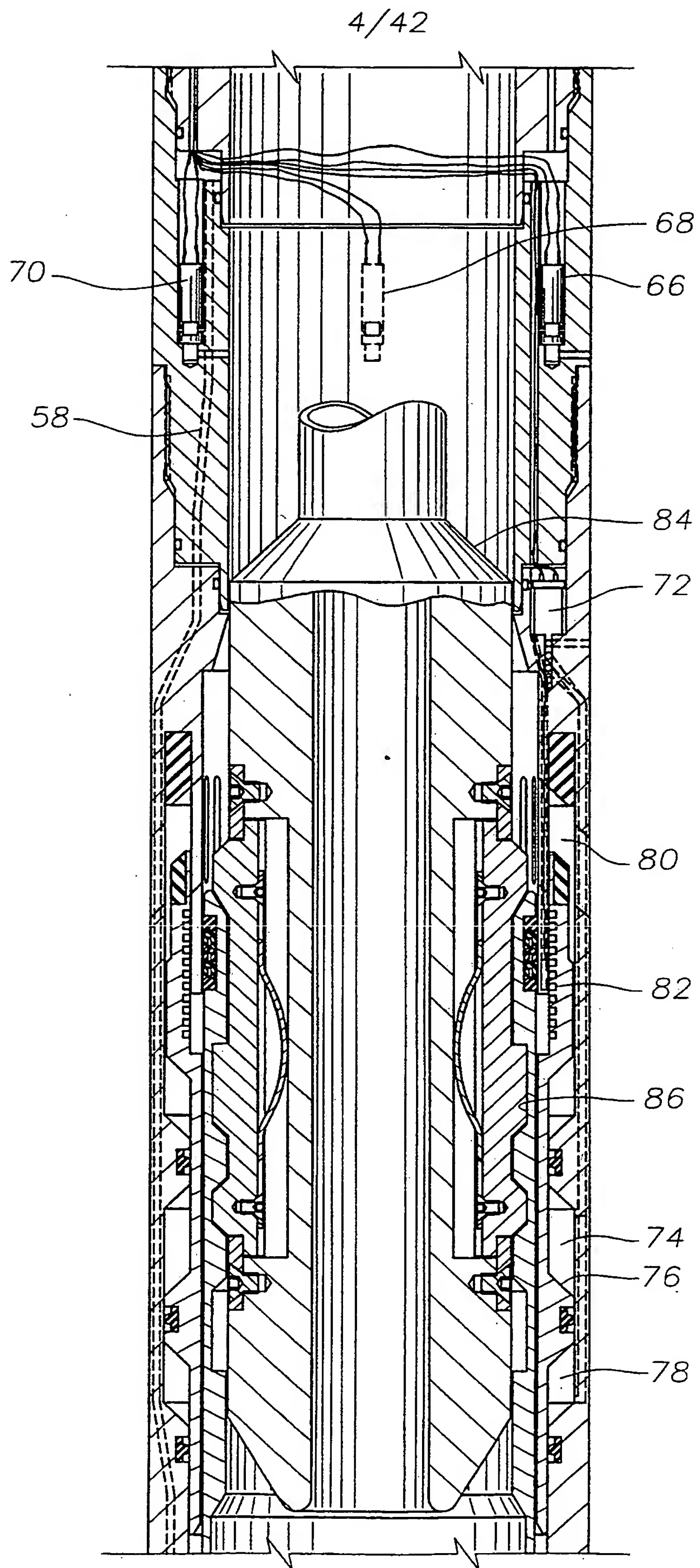


Fig. 2c

3/42

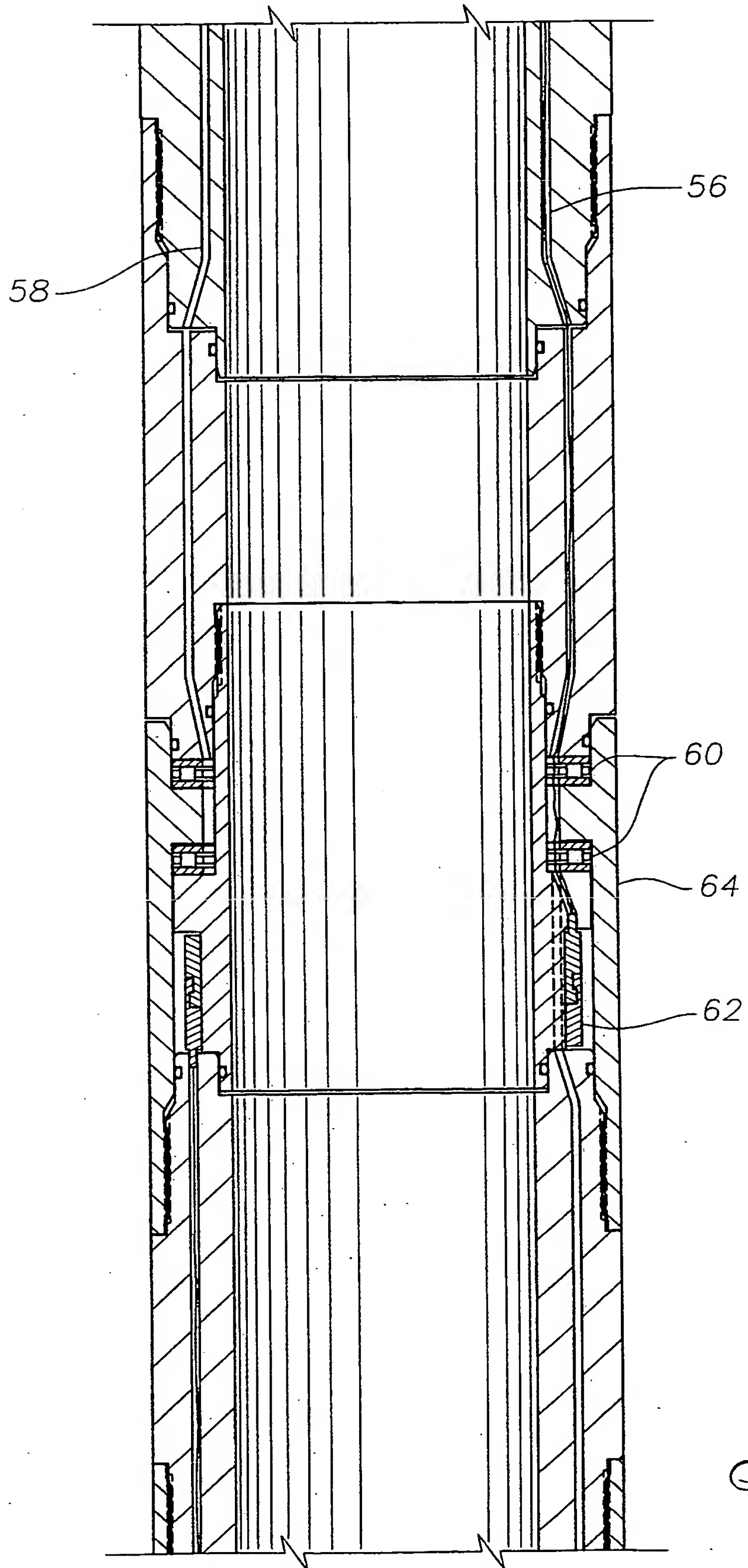


Fig. 2b

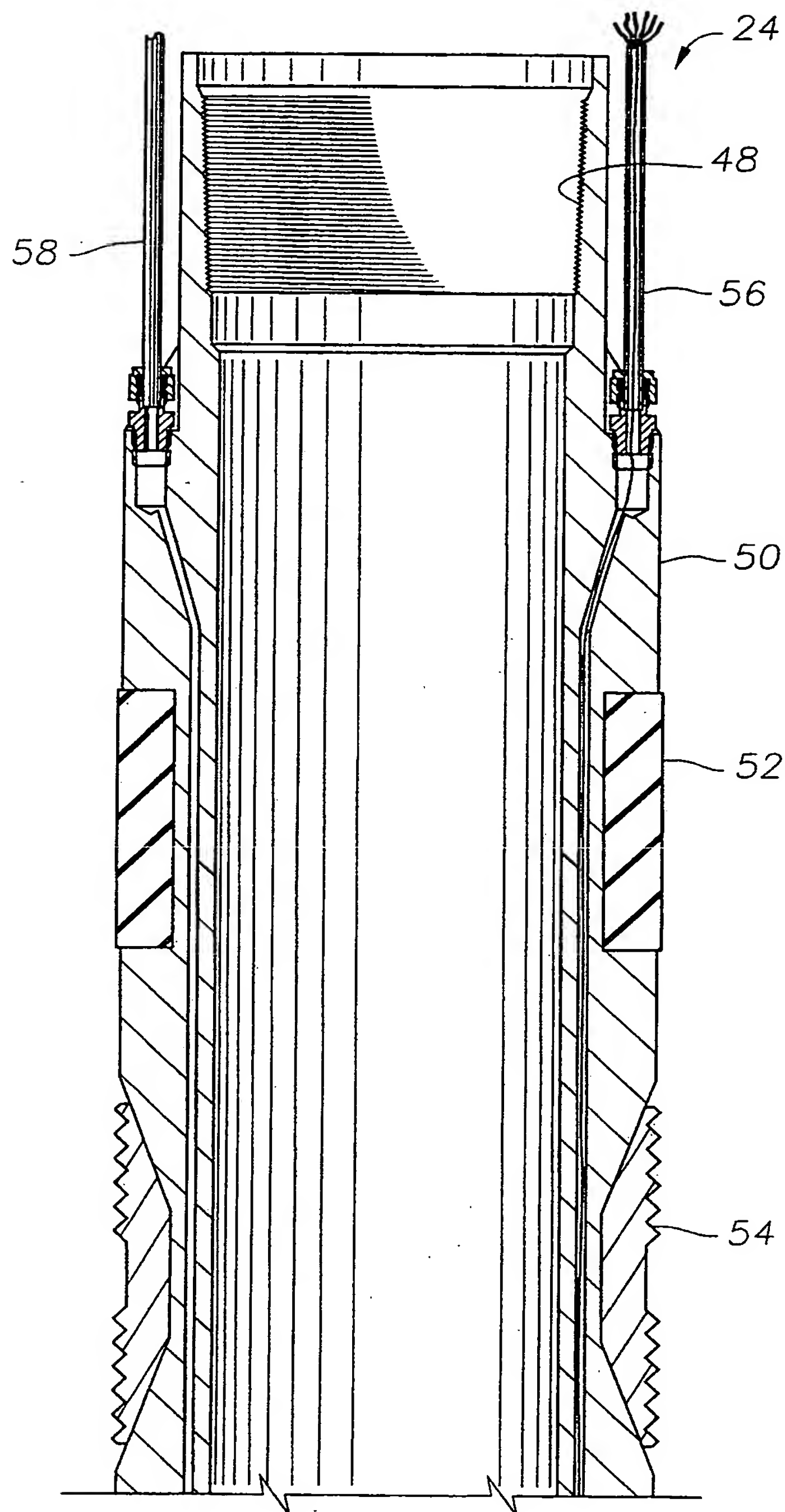


Fig. 2a

1/42

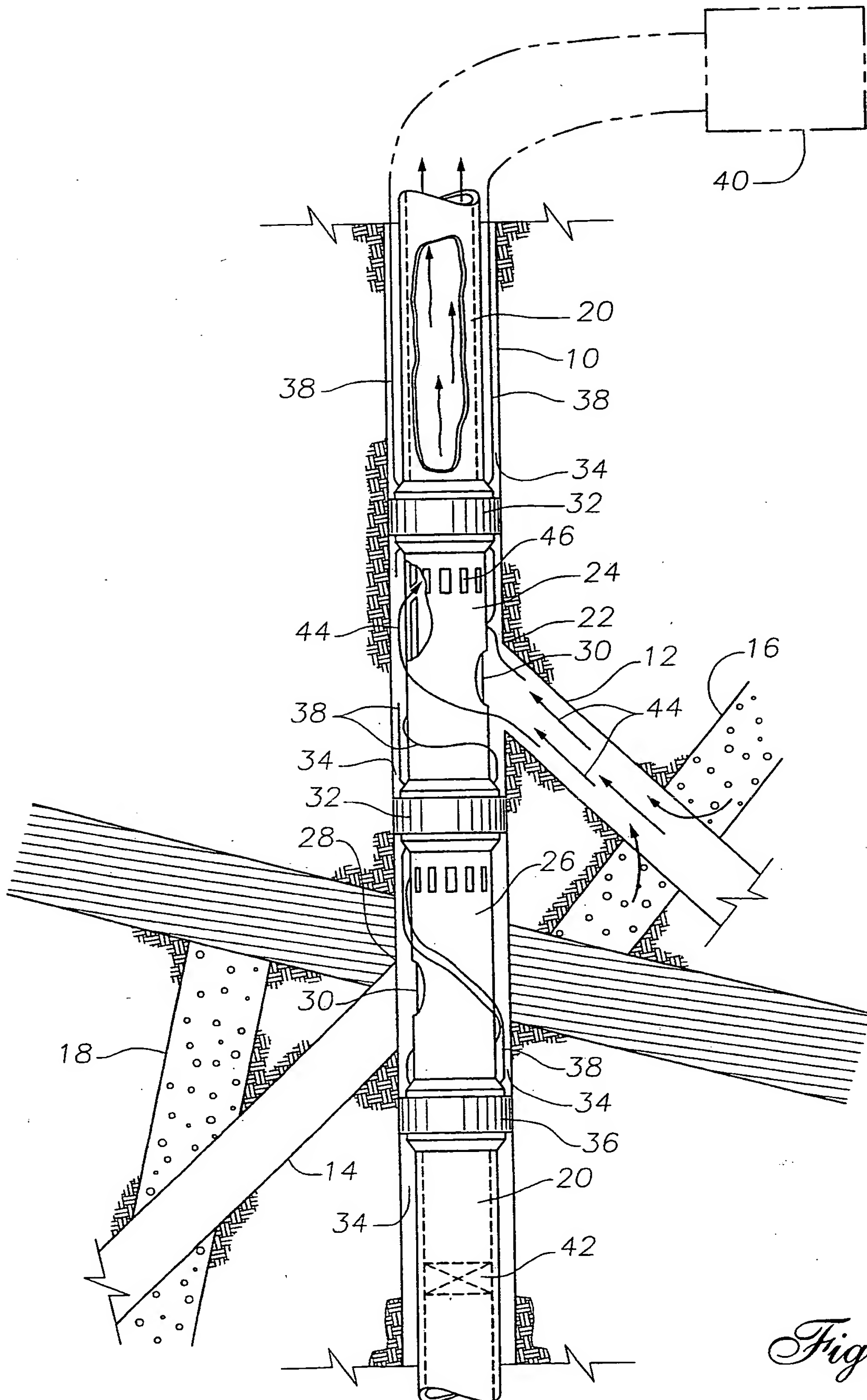


Fig. 1